

BACH AND PIETISM: THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH
MUSIC OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH TO EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY LUTHERAN ORTHODOXY AND PIETISM
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
SAINT MATTHEW PASSION

A Professional Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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There is no doubt that many seeds of splendid virtues are to be found in such souls as are stirred by music; and them who have no feeling for it I hold no better than sticks and stones. If any man despises music, as all fanatics do, for him I have no liking; for music is a gift of God, not an invention of men. Thus it expels the devil and makes people cheerful. Then one forgets wrath, impurity, sycophancy, and other vices. Next to theology I give music the highest and most honorable place; and everyone knows how David and all saints have put divine thoughts into verse, rhyme, and song.

- Martin Luther

The devil takes flight at the sound of music,
just as he does at the words of theology, and
for this reason the prophets always combined
theology and music, the teaching of truth and
the chanting of psalms and hymns.

- Martin Luther

Next to the Word of God, only music deserves being extolled as the mistress and governess of human feelings...

Through the medium of music the Holy Spirit places His gifts in the hands of the Prophets; again, through music the devil is driven away, as was the case with Saul...

The Father and Prophets desired...that nothing be more intimately linked up with the Word of God than music.

- Martin Luther

Some people meditate on Christ's passion by venting their anger on the Jews. This singing and ranting about wretched Judas satisfies them, for they are in the habit of complaining about other people, of condemning and reproaching their adversaries. That might well be a meditation on the wickedness of Judas and the Jews, but not on the sufferings of Christ...

Some feel pity for Christ, lamenting and bewailing his innocence. They are like the women who followed Christ from Jerusalem and were chided and told by Christ that it would be better to weep for themselves and their children...

They contemplate Christ's passion aright who view it with a terror-stricken heart and a despairing conscience. This terror must be felt as you witness the stern wrath and the unchanging earnestness with which God looks upon sin and sinners, so much so that he was unwilling to release sinners even for his only and dearest Son without his payment of the severest penalty for them. Thus he says in Isaiah 53, 'I have chastised him for the transgressions of my people.' If the dearest child is punished thus, what will be the fate of sinners. It must be an inexpressible and unbearable earnestness that forces such a great and infinite person to suffer and die to appease it. And if you seriously consider that it is God's very own Son, the eternal wisdom of the Father, who suffers, you will be terrified indeed. The more you think about it, the more intensely will you be frightened...

However, you can spur yourself on to believe. First of all, you must no longer contemplate the suffering of Christ (for this has already done its work and terrified you), but pass beyond that and see his friendly heart and how this heart beats with such love for you that it impels him to bear with pain your conscience and your sin. Then your heart will be filled with love for him, and the confidence of your faith will be strengthened. Now continue to rise beyond Christ's heart to God's heart and you will see that Christ would not have shown this love for you if God in his eternal love had not wanted this, for Christ's love for you is due to his obedience to God. Thus you will find the divine and kind paternal heart, and, as Christ says, you will be drawn to the Father through him. Then you will understand the words of Christ, 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, etc.' We know God aright when we grasp him not in his might or wisdom

(for then he proves terrifying), but in his kindness and love. Then faith and confidence are able to exist, and then man is truly born anew in God.

After your heart has thus become firm in Christ, and love, not fear of pain, has made you a foe of sin, then Christ's passion must from that day on become a pattern for your entire life. Henceforth you will have to see his passion differently. Until now we regarded it as a sacrament which is active in us while we were passive, but now we find that we too must be active...

- Martin Luther

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ABSTRACT

The life and work of Johann Sebastian Bach poses a conflict. By background, reputation and vocational involvement he belongs within the context of Lutheran orthodoxy. However, through his compositions, reflecting the spirit and emotions of his texts, he exhibits an affinity to the Pietist attitude within eighteenth century German Lutheranism.

Yet, during Bach's lifetime an acrimonious controversy raged between these two factions. The Pietists contended that the Church had grown cold, scholastic, dogmatic, more concerned with polemics than with vital Christian experience and evidence of regeneration. Both the institution of the Church and the life of the clergy and church membership required drastic change for the Pietist renewal to take place. The Orthodoxists protested the excesses of emotionalism and separatism of the Pietists whom they vigorously opposed.

The purpose of this study is to seek a possible reconciliation between these two apparently contradictory facets as manifested in Bach. It is undertaken by reviewing the origins and characteristics of Lutheran orthodoxy and of Pietism in eighteenth century Germany. A comparison of hymns from various sources is made to Luther's Passion Sermon. A brief biographical account of Bach follows with reference to his exposure to Pietism and his involvement in

orthodox Lutheranism.

Bach's use of the traditional Lutheran chorale, returning it to its former place in the liturgy of his church, set him to composing music which conveys the deep piety expressed in their texts. It is contended that Bach himself personally reflected such a piety in his own spirit and was a master of creating music which expressed religious conviction with an intimate intensity.

The declared intention of Bach was to reorganize Lutheran church music. He accomplished this by placing his creative genius at the disposal of the Church. Thus he provided "service music" to support the traditional liturgy which involved the congregation. His sacred compositions are biblically based as he interprets the Word of God through the congregational chorale, the chorale preludes and fantasias, the choral and solo cantatas, and the Passions.

Bach's Lutheranism is implied not only by the professional fulfillment of his vocational aim, but also by his theological studies and his biblical exegesis. Yet all this flowed through the composer's piety and sensitivity as an intimate and spiritually exalted expression of Christ's atoning work.

A reconciliation of the "conflict" earlier indicated is sought in this study by recognizing Bach's pious sensitivities which are actually not out-of-character for

Luther's church. Such are expressed within the Lutheran tradition to varying degrees by its sixteenth and seventeenth century religious poets. They were inspired by the earlier representatives of a mysticism which expresses an intense religious experience of a personal relationship to God.

An analysis of portions of the *St. Matthew Passion* is used in this study to illustrate the coexistence in this composer of the intense piety and also of a committed loyalty to the traditional liturgy and doctrine of the Lutheran church. The study attempts to show how Bach, theologically and institutionally bound to orthodox Lutheranism, was able to engender within his hearers a personal as well as communal worship experience by means of his music.

Thus both the best of the two contenders in the Lutheran orthodox-Pietist controversy are met in Bach to produce a harmony of both dogma and devotion.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) has been referred to several times as the "fifth Evangelist." In 1948 and the following year the Columbia Broadcasting Company produced a radio program on Easter Sunday consisting of readings from the Gospels and music composed by Bach. The announcer stated that Bach warrants the rank of the Fifth Evangelist on the basis of his understanding of the death of Jesus. An article, appearing in *Religion and Life* in 1950 written by Allen G. Burt on the music of Bach, is entitled, "The Fifth Evangelist."¹ Scholars and musicologists in Europe have also bestowed this title upon Bach in their various writings.

William Scheide, writing in the study, *Johann Sebastian Bach As a Biblical Interpreter*, states, Bach is a "singularly acute interpreter of the Bible."² The French organist-composer, Charles Marie Widor, has written in the preface to Albert Schweitzer's two-volume work on Bach, "For me, Bach is the greatest of preachers. His cantatas and Passions tune the soul to a state in which we grasp the

¹Allen G. Burt, "Fifth Evangelist," *Religion in Life*, XIX:3 (Summer 1950), 431.

²William H. Scheide, *Johann Sebastian Bach as Biblical Interpreter* (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1952), p. 25.

truth and oneness of things, and rise above everything that is paltry, everything that divides us."³

Emphasizing Bach's interpretative powers and yet not quite according him an Evangelist's status, Paul Minear maintains,

...although Bach may not fully merit the title of the Fifth Evangelist, he can present excellent qualifications as an interpreter of all four Evangelists, first because he so frequently penetrated to the inner dynamics of the biblical narrative, and second, because he chose forms of expression that communicate those dynamics to a universal audience. Like the voice of those Evangelists, his is a 'voice of spiritual reality that speaks from a strata of thought deeper and more immutable than any intellectual forms of communication.'⁴

Bach was raised and trained in the Lutheran Church. He spent most of his life in its service as a composer, performer and teacher. His vocational goal, he himself stated, was the reformation of Lutheran church music. He lived through theological controversies that raged throughout Germany in his lifetime. At the time of his death Bach's library contained the standard works of Lutheran theology, including two editions of Luther's works, several volumes of polemical writings which upheld Lutheran ortho-

³Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), I, xii.

⁴Paul S. Minear, "J. S. Bach and J. A. Ernesti: A Case Study in Exegetical and Theological Conflict," in *Our Common History as Christians, Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 4.

doxy, as well as some classical and standard texts which represent both Medieval mysticism and eighteenth century Pietism.

The controversies spanning the lifetime of the Leipzig Cantor related to issues raised by a devotional fervor which objected to the rigid and formal scholasticism characteristic of the Lutheran church at the close of the seventeenth century and continuing well into the eighteenth. Eventually both contenders faced a common foe in the form of a rationalistic awakening that swept through Europe.

Musically Bach was also at the point of a cross-fire. The style of the Italian School had already moved into a position of influence among his German colleagues and expressed itself in an "operatic" style in church music which horrified members both of congregations and town councils who were highly critical of its introduction into the church. Bach basically was a conservator of the older tradition of church music. However, his purposes of communicating and eliciting a religious, devotional response from the hearers of his music were served by his adoption of some of the characteristics of this "Italian manner" of composition.

In various settings and exposures to the intellectual, religious and musical cross-currents of his time Bach produced prodigiously out of his creative spirit. He is the composer of some one-hundred thirty chorale preludes, several hundreds of harmonizations of chorales, over two

hundred ninety-five cantatas, possibly five Passions, the B minor and other masses, many concerti written for different instruments and also of numerous chamber music works. Some of these have been lost, however. Furthermore, the authenticity of certain other compositions attributed to him is questioned by some specialists.

There appear to be two poles around which Bach oriented his life: the fullness of life and death, experienced and expressed through a deep and consoling faith, on the one hand; and the joyousness of life expressed in the elaborate and celebrative quality of the Baroque, on the other hand.⁵

Regarding any revealing biographical information with which to probe the depths and recesses of Bach's personality and spirit, Hindemith declares,

the earliest biographical notes, dating from shortly after his death, are so fragmentary that a mythical being is suggested. Later he is described as a martyr sacrificing himself to his art; as a knight of chivalry fighting against all comers, since the world of his contemporaries cannot comprehend his greatness and impedes his mission wherever possible; as an upright citizen without fear or falsehood; as an all-embracing being who not only performs daily miracles in his art but knows the directest access to the universe and is an intimate friend of *Creator Spiritus*...About his human qualities his musical works are quite naturally a poor source of information...Only about a tenth of the

⁵Hans Besch, "Johann Sebastian Bach--Citizen of the Worlds," *Lutheran Quarterly*, II:2 (May 1950), 132.

letters (7) are of a more personal nature, but these, strangely enough, are even more misleading and disappointing for those seeking extraordinary human and artistic revelations...In Bach's case towering eminence and personal indistinctness, superhuman intuition and pettiness are mingled.⁶

In this study it is hoped that some light may be shed upon certain apparent contradictions that seem to appear in the compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach. His "biographical reputation" is that of a staunch orthodox Lutheran. And yet his music and many of the texts of the cantatas and Passions which he chose are much closer to the spirit of Pietism. In the course of our investigation we will discover that Bach returned to the poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in his revival of that chorale tradition. Furthermore, his other librettists, loyal orthodoxists as they were, reflected a devotional spirit stemming from a concern for the worshipers's response to God's gift in Christ. Bach's Lutheran Christocentrism leads on to an emphasis on the believer as related to his savior and to musical expressions of that relationship. So Bach provides through them a piety that is both subjectively expressive and doctrinally orthodox. He supplements their intimate spiritual utterances with his

⁶Paul Hindemith, *Johann Sebastian Bach, Heritage and Obligation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 11.

"devotional" music. The Medieval mysticism that shines through the writings of these earlier poets of the Reformation tradition reaches into the musical scores of Bach, thus producing a harmony of both dogma and devotion.

CHAPTER 2

THE ORIGINS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF
ORTHODOX LUTHERANISM

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CONTROVERSY

Bach lived during the time of bitter polemical warfare between the theologians upholding the orthodox Lutheran system and the pastors and teachers who were part of the Pietist movement at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries in Germany. The origins of Pietism go back to the theological currents and fortunes of the Lutheran church shortly after its founding. They are also related to the currents of mysticism of the Christian church. Pietism was a reaction against the dogmatic and scholastic character which developed within the Lutheran church, particularly after the Thirty Year's War (1618-1648). This rigidity regarding matters of faith and practice, administration and observance is called Lutheran orthodoxy as associated with that period.

EARLY REFORMATION EMPHASIS ON "PURE DOCTRINE"

Soon after the success of the Protestant Reformation in Germany under the leadership of Luther, doctrinal controversy arose. In these early years there were attempts at reconciliations with the Reformed emphases of Calvin and

Zwingli. Furthermore, even those within the Lutheran fold expressed differences from the teachings of Luther himself. There was a need for developing a sense of loyalty and adherence to Luther's interpretation of the Faith - all of which necessitated an emphasis upon inculcating and promoting "pure doctrine." There was also a need for strict and formal catechetical teaching to counteract the religious illiteracy that was so prevalent among the general populace.

Insistence upon "pure doctrine" by the early Lutherans was motivated, in addition, by the practical consideration of the new church's achieving a necessary unified structure. The matter of doctrinal agreement throughout the various German territories to which the Reformation faith spread became the basis of a bond of union among the Lutherans under a variety of political administrations. This situation eventually led Melanchthon to assert that Lutheranism was characterized by "an assent by which you accept all articles of the faith."¹ The faith that once had at its center the personal relationship between God and the believer as mediated through Christ was now becoming a Protestant scholasticism. A standard of "right belief" was set by the publication, in 1610, of a work entitled,

¹Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), pp. 441-2.

Compendium locorum theologicorum, written by Leonhard Hutter (1563-1616). This became the most widely-studied Lutheran theological text for the next one and one-half centuries. Bach was schooled in it in his student days.

A later factor contributed to the need for maintaining and even restoring the Church doctrinally, namely, the devastating effects of the Thirty Year's War on Germany.

To Germany the Thirty Year's War was an unmitigated and frightful evil. The land had been ploughed from end to end for a generation by lawless and plundering armies. Population had fallen from sixteen millions to less than six. Fields were waste. Commerce and manufacturing destroyed. Above all, intellectual life had stagnated, morals had been roughened and corrupted, and religion grievously maimed. A century after its close the devastating consequences had not been made good. Little evidence of spiritual life was manifested in this frightful time of war...²

The rebuilding of the country included the requirement of a unified and effective church. This was another motivation for the maintenance of an orthodox front on the part of Lutheranism during the second half of the seventeenth century. Not only doctrine, but also polity and administration came in for clear-cut definition and execution in order for the Church to be able to bring the people back to its sacraments and tutelage. All this reduced the limits of toleration for any emphases and practices not considered

²Ibid., p. 451.

to be within the Church's established tradition.

Under these conditions Lutheran orthodoxy revived. The second half of the seventeenth century may be more accurately called the age of orthodoxy than the century after 1555. The old conflict between Lutherans and Reformed Protestants continued with undiminished vigor (even) throughout the Thirty Year's War.³

Orthodoxy further entrenched itself in response to the attempts of Georg Calixt (1586-1656) who believed in the eternity of the Christian Church and sought to recapture the spirit of the unbroken Church of the first five centuries. He claimed himself to be a staunch adherent of the Lutheran Church, while still seeking a degree of tolerance toward those outside the orthodox camp. However, Calixt was furiously attacked for his syncretism as orthodoxy became the more unyielding. Moreover, the battle was waged in both the sanctuary and the school.

With dogged passion...the orthodox Lutheran theologians made the defense and diffusion of pure doctrine the supreme task of the universities. The 'professor of controversies' became more important than the professor of biblical theology, and religion almost became identified with doctrine. In order to exclude subjective mysticism, the thesis of the divine inspiration of the Scripture was carried to the extreme...the Bible was made the exclusive source of revelation as well as the only channel of communication with the divine.⁴

The Church was thus marked with bitter controversy, doctrinal discord, stiff formalism and a scholastic dispu-

³Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany 1648-1840* (New York: Knopf, 1963), p. 129.

⁴Ibid., p. 130.

tatiousness which was carried off in the pulpits in terms that were far beyond the people's comprehension. The growth of personal religion was suffocated by the governing authorities through their paternalistic and supervisory activities. Deputations actually inquired into the state of ministers' religious attitudes and the condition of their parishes. There was a practically universal enforcement of catechetical knowledge, worship attendance and confession. Consequently the ministers came to be more authority figures than pastors. In effect they became an extension of the secular authorities administering a rigidity of observance within the life of the churches.

ORTHODOXY'S "OBJECTIVE" CATEGORIES

Orthodoxy represented a completely unyielding attitude with reference to the traditional pillars of Lutheran theology, expressed in the most extreme fashion. It "...moved toward an uncompromising and extremist interpretation of doctrine, conferring 'on Lutheran doctrine a degree of containment it had never known before' (Holl)."⁵ The cardinal doctrine of justification by faith was emphasized to the exclusion of any concern for the psychological or subjective states of religious experience. The

⁵Friedrich Blume, *Protestant Church Music, a History* (New York: Norton, 1974), p. 188.

stress in orthodoxy was upon the saving act of God in Jesus Christ as an objective reality to which the believer is to relate through his faith. Belief in the phenomenological event secured justification. Thus, as the result of a lack of concern in this emphasis for the subjective experience, no consideration was given to the evidences of regeneration. Righteousness was understood as imputed through belief in God's saving act. Luther's stress upon the sufficiency and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice as appropriated by faith was made absolute as the objective aspect of salvation so that doctrinal assent became the issue to the exclusion of personal experience. To that extent orthodoxy had strayed from the experience of justification which enflamed the Firebrand of the Reformation, Martin Luther.

The basis of this doctrine was the Scriptures which were received as the trustworthy and sufficient source of revelation. They were the standard of doctrinal rectitude for the Orthodoxists who were more inclined to use them in that rôle than as a source of devotional inspiration and guidance gleaned by an intensive reading of them. Dogma and creedal formula were dependent for their "correctness" upon their biblical source.

Just as the belief in the truth of justification by faith was central to the Faith as taught by Lutheran orthodoxy, so belief in and assent to the traditional statements of the Faith were essential in that same system. The

creeds and confessions, the "symbols" of the Church, were to be accepted without reservation or deviation. Thus the Christian faith, as mediated through orthodoxy, became a system nominally based on Scripture, representing a fixed position of dogmatic interpretation that was rigid, exact and which called for intellectual conformity by the believer.

Partaking of the Sacraments and attendance at worship on a regular basis were requirements which distinguished a Christian from a non-follower. Latent in this was the possibility of these requirements being fulfilled, and their means extended, on an *ex opere operato* basis. And so

the layman's rôle was largely passive, to accept the dogmas which he was assured were pure, to listen to their exposition from the pulpit, to partake of the sacraments and share the ordinances of the church, these were the practical sum of the Christian life.⁶

LUTHER'S SPIRIT

The spirit of Luther did not reflect such a rigid formalism, nor so cold, scholastic an approach. For him the doctrine of justification by faith was an expression of the truth of his own experience in relationship to God's grace through which forgiveness is mediated by the offer of Christ upon the Cross. The reader is referred to Luther's

⁶Walker, p. 496.

Good Friday sermon regarding meditation on the Cross, a portion of which is excerpted at the beginning of this study. Addressing himself to the question as to how one is to relate to Christ's passion with all its horror and terror over the fact that one has caused the anguish of God's beloved Son, Luther states,

...spur yourself on to believe. First of all, you must no longer contemplate the suffering of Christ (for this has already done its work and terrified you), but pass beyond that and see his friendly heart and how this heart beats with such love for you that it impels him to bear with pain your conscience and sin. Then your heart will be filled with love for him...Now continue to rise beyond Christ's heart to God's heart...We know God aright when we grasp him...in his kindness and love.⁷

There is nothing cold, rigid, doctrinal nor scholastic about such terms and experiences as "love," "friendly heart," "paternal heart," and "kindness." In such concepts Luther reveals a warmth of piety and intensity of spiritual experience that hardly falls within the traits for which orthodoxy was criticized.

While dealing with the stark reality of Jesus' death, Luther, in his hymn, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, based on an old Latin sequence, *Victimae Paschali*, nevertheless reflects the spirit of warmth, joy and thankfulness. The sixth stanza, together with the seventh, reads:

⁷Martin Luther, *Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), XLII, 13.

Therefore let us keep the feast
 With heartfelt exultation;
 God to shine on us is pleased,
 The sun of our salvation.
 On our hearts, with heavenly grace,
 Beams the brightness of his face,
 And the night of sin has vanished.
 Hallelujah!

Eat th' unleavened bread to-day,
 And drink the paschal chalice;
 From God's pure Word put away
 The leaven of guile and malice.
 Christ alone our souls will feed;
 He is meat and drink indeed.
 Faith no other life desireth.
 Hallelujah!⁸

Luther's Christmas hymn, *Vom Himmel hoch*, interprets the atoning gift of God's Son descending to a sinful and needy earth. Its thirteenth stanza engages in a charming intimacy in terms of an invitation to the Holy Child, addressed in the diminutive, *Jesulein*. The Child is enjoined to make his resting place within one's heart:

Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
 Make thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
 Here in my poor heart's inmost shrine,
 That I may evermore be thine.⁹

The Luther who seems to have been filled with a tenderness as he contemplates the miracle of Advent and Christmas discloses a spirit of intimacy that balances off his concern for exactness of dogma. That aspect of the Faith and a

⁸James F. Lambert, *Luther's Hymns* (Philadelphia: General Council, 1917), p. 95.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 122.

concern for how the believer responds to God's gracious mercy in Christ is what moved the later sixteenth century Lutheran poets to utter their expressions of heartfelt piety.

MYSTICISM WITHIN LUTHERANISM

Mysticism appears in various forms of expression and intensity throughout Christendom's history, and it did not leave the Lutheran church untouched. Kaspar Schwenckfeld (1489-1561), a Silesian member of the nobility, in his mystical interpretations of Luther's concepts, reflected an intimacy that adumbrates later Pietism. He condemned some of Luther's followers since, according to him, "they reject spiritual feeling and the inner experience of God's grace which Luther makes necessary for salvation."¹⁰

In response to the earlier Lutheran scholasticism voices were heard asking for a more pious, personal and intimate relationship to God's forgiving love in Christ. Johann Gerhard (1582-1637), while he was as strict a dogmatist as his Wittenberg colleague, Leonhard Hutter, expressed a "cultivated mysticism" in his *Heilige Betrachtungen*. In 1662-3 he published his *Schola pietatis* which, although it is a formal dogmatic guide, is a devotional

¹⁰Koppel Sub Pinson, *Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), p. 39.

book intended to maintain doctrinal correctness while still allowing for the values of meditative contemplation. His place within Lutheran scholasticism, however, was secured by the publication, in 1622, of his *Loci Theologici*, a classic exposition of Lutheran orthodoxy. Still he could be concerned for the cultivation of a warm, inner spiritual life.

Earlier, in 1605, Johann Arndt (1555-1621), the principal minister in Braunschweig-Celle, had published his *Wahres Christentum*. This work of this orthodox Lutheran was to become the most popular and a very influential book of the century. Arndt held that the individual could achieve union with God by means of an active piety, devotional meditation and absorption in prayer. Another force for a mystic approach within Lutheranism was Jakob Böhme (1575-1624) of Görlitz who, however, carried his speculation somewhat far afield. He was critical of what he assessed in the church as *ex opere operato* tendencies regarding its offices. Valentin Weigel (1533-1588), whose writings were posthumously published in 1609 - though shared with intimate friends earlier, showed himself to be a mystic influenced by neo-Platonic pantheism. Johannes Tauler (c. 1300-1361) and Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1327), representing Medieval mysticism, are part of the undercurrent within the stream of German Protestantism in the later sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth centuries.

The emphasis of these writers who were both theologians and laymen, yet with equal influence upon both clergy and laity, is upon a personal approach to God through meditation. In some cases it went so far as to include a mystical union with God - *unio mystica*. They represent a variety of positions from striving after a more Christ-like life to certain forms of pantheism. But essentially mysticism is concerned with the believer's relationship to God as an inner experience of revelation and illumination which is immediately apprehended. Some of these authors mention a release of the soul from its finite bonds so as to be able to achieve an inward communion with the Divine. This is the background of the emphasis found in the sixteenth and seventeenth century Lutheran poets upon a personal relationship to Jesus, identifying with his suffering and seeking the comfort of his indwelling presence.

SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY POETS

During the second half of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth there was a great out-pouring of religious poetry in Germany. Many of the verses were set to existing and newly-composed tunes to become the great heritage of the Lutheran chorales. These reflected the newly-felt piety that was prevalent during these years.

Within the life of the Church

there was no attempt to upset the sacramental foundation, and acts and forms of worship remained unchanged. But private devotions and pious contemplations were held in ever increasing esteem...In keeping with Luther's attitude, orthodoxy firmly adhered to the canon that preaching was the only legitimate agency of the divine Word, and that the rites of the church were the only authentic preparation for justification. Conversely, however, the doors were opened again, especially by Arnd, to ancient motifs of a mystical nature, and the feeling asserted itself that the individual could attain union with God also by means of active piety, devotional contemplation, and immersion in prayer. Even orthodoxy conceded the ancient doctrine of *unio mystica* - the mysterious, almost corporeal union of the person 'reborn' in Christ through the experience of justification, giving it the new name 'doctrine of indwelling.' The deluge of prayer books, devotional tracts, and hymnals seem to indicate the great need for literature of spiritual edification and contemplation.¹¹

Both orthodoxy and this pious, mystical emphasis coexisted within the church. Many of the religious poets expressing this combination were the prominent ministers of the time. They provided devotional texts which a century later Bach used as the foundation of his cantatas and chorale preludes and which he interspersed throughout his Passions.

Among the more prolific and well-known of these authors are Niklas Selnecker (1532-1592), Bartholomaeus Ringwaldt (1532-1599), Ludwig Helmbold (1532-1598), Martin Schalling (1532-1608),¹² Martin Möller (1547-1606), Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608), Martin Behm (1557-1622), Johann Heermann (1585-1647), Simon Dach (1605-1659), Johann Rist

¹¹Blume, pp. 188-9.

¹²Note the identical birth year of these four!

(1607-1667), Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676), and Paul Flemming (1609-1640). Some of these wrote both the verses and the melodies to which they were put as hymns. The successive editions of the Lutheran hymnal up to the present time all contain large numbers of selections written by these authors.

The aim of these poets was to set forth the Gospel message in verse to make music both for home devotional use and for the church service. Some were merely expressions of inner experiences and relationships for the edification of the reader, but these, too, were later published as hymns.

The hymns of Paul Gerhardt reflect the personal, subjective relationship to the Faith. Over one-hundred thirty of his hymns begin with "*ich*", indicating their subjective turn. Yet, as an evidence of his stubborn orthodoxy, the otherwise irenic Gerhardt would not ascribe to a statement of toleration which the Great Elector in Brandenburg in 1664 required all the ministers of his realm to sign. As a result, Gerhardt was suspended in Berlin and moved on to Saxony.

An example of Gerhardt's individualistic piety is his hymn, *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, the famous Passion chorale set to Hans Leo Hassler's (1564-1612) tune, *Herzlich tut mich verlangen*. The text is a translation from the Latin of a stanza from a seven-part poem by Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) entitled, "A rhythmic prayer to any

one of the members of Christ suffering and hanging on the Cross." Part seven begins *Salve caput cruentatum*, providing Gerhardt with his reflection on the bleeding brow of the Savior. In the poem Gerhardt translates the agony of the crucifixion into the joy of the believer who is saved by the sacrifice. Yet the stanzas also acknowledge the guilt of the believer and include a plea to be accepted by the Lord ("dearest friend") so that he may see and accept the Cross in his dying moments, "for he who dies believing dies safely in thy love."

Gerhardt combined both the doctrinal certainties orthodoxy proclaimed and the aspect of a spiritual glow of faith with the recent reform of literature that was taking place in his day.

In Gerhardt the consciousness of the assurance contained in the Christian message and membership was counteracted by a highly individualized piety. He accompanied the events of the liturgical year in his poems, and they also depicted the divine presence in the world, particularly the peace and beauty of nature. The new poetic rules of Opitz and a purified simple language became the vehicle of a personal religiosity of unaffected depth.¹³

The Thirty Year's War had its influence on these hymn writers and poets. Outwardly during these years there was little evidence of community spiritual life because of people's involvement with the war and its consequent devastation. However, the verses of these poets reflect a heart-

¹³Holborn, pp. 166-7.

felt piety written in response to the stresses of this vast dislocation of normal life. Martin Rinkart (1586-1649) survived the War by only one year. He was deeply involved in its tragedies. Eilenburg, where he was archbishop, received many refugees during the War. In 1637 a pestilence swept through the town and Rinkart was called upon often to conduct as many as forty or fifty burial services a day during the height of its ravages. Yet at this time he could write *Nun danket Alle Gott*, in which he exhorts gratitude for the continuous sustaining grace of God extending from the time of infancy on throughout our lives.

For all its emphasis upon doctrinal "correctness," assigning the sermon to the focal point in the worship service, insisting upon participation in the sacraments provided by the Church and upon a formal catechetical presentation of the Faith, there was still within the ranks of orthodoxy the spirit of a subjective religious response to human sinfulness as met by God's redemptive grace. This latter spirit was expressed by the afore-mentioned poets. It made its way to the heart of the believer through the hymnody of the time. Later musical compositions, based on this chorale tradition, carried that spirit into the eighteenth century Lutheran church. Bearing this in mind, we see that Lutheran orthodoxy was not all that "frozen" and neglectful of individual spiritual needs as its institutional life, indeed, did exhibit.

In music, dogmatic rigidity in the orthodox doctrines joined with ego-conscious piety, and the individual soul emerged as the moving force. It proclaimed its experience of God. The soul (palpably represented as an allegorical figure, from Hammerschmidt (c. 1611-1675) to Bach (1685-1750)) sang forth its lament and its jubilation in tones of fervent passion, in gestures of heavy pathos. Its pangs of death, the sweetness of its love for Jesus, the agony of its consciousness of guilt, and the heavenly bliss of the *unio mystica*: all these emotions were translated into gripping tones. Whenever other words were added to the biblical texts, they were preferably poems expressing these very sentiments with an increased intensity, or else they were mystical and ecstatic 'devotional texts' from the devotional literature of the latter part of the 16th century.¹⁴

The poetic and musical compositions of the great spirits of seventeenth-century Germany were added to the musical traditions of the Lutheran church of subsequent centuries. "The great chorales they produced around the time of the Thirty Year's War carried on the fine tradition of the past and were in quality hardly inferior to the magnificent hymns written in Luther's own time."¹⁵ This period of productivity multiplied vastly the store of congregational music available for worship. In comparison to the Erfurt collection of twenty-six hymns published in 1525, an eight-volume Leipzig song book was issued in 1697 containing more than five thousand entries. Bach had this collection in his library, and his constant use of chorale

¹⁴Blume, p. 142.

¹⁵Karl Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 110.

materials in his compositions would indicate his intimate familiarity with the details of its contents. Rather than writing new chorales he deliberately chose to return to the former centuries to reclaim the treasures of that era for the worshipers of his time.¹⁶ In a sense his efforts toward a reorganization of church music took the form of a Luther revival using the materials of former years and joining them to the music of his soul in accordance with the features of the Italian style of composition.

However, in spite of this extensive and rich reservoir for personal devotion and inspired worship a need still existed for more adequate channels of pious expression within the life of the ecclesiastical institution. That requirement, plus a demand for a regenerative reform among the people and clergy of the Church, led to the origin of the Pietist movement during the last third of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century Lutheranism in Germany.

¹⁶Actually it is believed by some that Bach wrote several original chorales which appear in the Schemelli hymnal (Leipzig, 1736) for which he provided the figured bass. The range of disagreement as to the number is from one to twenty-four. Most likely the lower estimates are correct. Schweitzer says they are not really chorales, but rather sacred arias whose composition was influenced by the "Italian" style.

CHAPTER 3

THE ORIGINS AND CHARACTERISTICS
OF GERMAN PIETISMPHILIPP JAKOB SPENER: *PIA DESIDERIA*

Eighteenth-century German Pietism has its distinguishable beginnings in the writings and work of Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705). He had been influenced by the historical mystical currents in earlier Lutheranism and also by the works of the English and Dutch writers in this vein. His student years were exposed to the Reformed approach to biblical studies in Strassburg and Geneva. Though much impressed by the care with which that tradition handled religious instruction and biblical studies, Spener never left his Lutheranism.

In 1666 he came to Frankfort as the principal minister. Four years later he invited students and others to his home for Bible studies, prayer, discussion of the Sunday sermon and a general deepening of the individual's spiritual life. Such meetings were called *collegia pietatis*, hence the name by which those pursuing this course were called. Such meetings later spread to many other locations. Eventually they generated a controversy since the Church insisted upon keeping religious instruction under its own purview and because these conventicles were seen as a threat

to regular participation in the services of the Church, even though Spener never intended them to displace the Church's function. He himself opposed any separatist tendencies, yet some of his followers withdrew from the worship services and the sacraments of the established Church.

Spener concentrated upon the cultivation of a warmer Christian life, a personal approach to biblical exegesis, the reduction of governmental interference in the administration of the church, the need for a moral reformation in the lives of the clergy and laity alike, evidences of regeneration within the spiritual life of the ministers and ministerial candidates, and a reduction of polemics in the pulpit. Theologically he placed more stress upon one's inner spiritual condition as regenerate than upon "right and pure doctrine" as defined by orthodoxy. His teachings were met with charges of heresy by the traditionalists, and his work was seen as a destructive threat to the church of Lutheran orthodoxy. Spener received a call to Dresden in 1686 and left Frankfort to escape the turmoil in which he was embroiled because of his views.

However, before leaving Frankfort, Spener wrote a preface for a new edition of Arndt's *Wahres Christentum* in 1675. It contained the elements of his position mentioned above together with some commentaries on his tenets. So popular was this statement that it was independently published and circulated as *Pia Desideria*. Pietism takes its

date of origin from that event.

After having difficulties again, this time in Dresden, Spener was invited to Berlin in 1691 by the Elector of Brandenburg, Frederick III, who was to become King Frederick I of Prussia in 1701. In that situation Spener was in a position to assist Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) to staff the newly-founded University of Halle and to secure the appointment of Pietist-oriented ministers to the pulpits of Brandenburg as vacancies occurred. Spener died in Berlin in 1705.

AUGUST HERMANN FRANCKE: HALLE

The next great figure of Pietism was August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) who, as a young instructor at the University of Leipzig, founded a *collegium philobiblicum* in 1686 together with a few associates. The purpose of the group was to study the Scriptures, but at first in a different manner from that of the Spener group in Frankfort. Francke's members sought to apply the new learning and scientific method which recently arrived on the intellectual scene to ferret out the message of the Bible. The following year, however, while in Lüneburg, pouring over the text John 20:13 in preparation of a sermon, Francke experienced a radical conversion which he regarded as a "new birth." He sought out Spener in Dresden and then returned to Leipzig, having espoused Pietism. His new outlook

caused an uproar: the Orthodoxists condemned him for his new views, but the students and townspeople flocked to his lectures. Seeking to restore order, an electoral edict put an end to conventicles. Johann Benedikt Carpzov (1639-1699), a former associate in the *collegium philobiblicum*, headed the opposition to drive Francke out of town. The latter was relieved to receive a call to Erfurt in 1690. But things did not go well there either, and he was expelled from that post also, again at the behest of Carpzov. That was in 1691, the same year in which Spener went to Berlin.

Spener was able to arrange for a position for Francke at the University of Halle and simultaneously one in the near-by parish in Glaucha. Later, in 1698, Francke formally became a member of the Halle faculty. He died in Halle in 1727 after a very active and accomplished life, having made that city the recognized center of Pietism at that time. In addition to his theological instruction at the University, he established a workhouse for unemployed, schools, an orphanage and a publishing house. His students answered the call to the mission field when, in 1705, Frederick IV of Denmark (1699-1730) wished to begin a mission in India. Francke became known as a foremost educator whose advice was sought out by many before starting their new schools.

The main distinguishing contribution which Francke brought to Pietism was his emphasis upon the inner struggle

of the soul which was the prerequisite to the new birth experience. Becoming a Christian for him meant a conscious conversion, a transforming and regenerative change. An inner struggle was the means of receiving the new life. This struggle came to be known as *Busskampf*, literally a battle involving confession and contrition on the part of the sinner. That perspective applied to any consideration of regeneration removed it from mere dogmatics and placed it within a psychological framework at the very heart of the believer's spiritual experience. No longer was the emphasis upon belief in the objective act of God in the Christ event; but it was now upon what takes place within the soul of the repentant sinner. However, this category of subjective evidence of regeneration itself became "dogmatized" to the extent of the Halle Pietists' establishing criteria according to which to judge another's spiritual condition and qualification.

Both Spener and Francke reflected rather Puritan and ascetic attitudes toward the *divertissement* and pleasures of this life. Such attitudes became somewhat characteristic of the Pietists. Moderation in dress and consumption was the rule. The theater, dance, card playing and elaborate music were rejected. Francke was severe in his limitation of the children's play in his orphanages. Yet the contributions to the improvement of the social welfare of the people made by the Pietists was considerable. Their

individualistic spirit also contributed toward the later popular movements for greater freedom among the people in Germany in the next century.

WÜRTTEMBERG PIETISM

Another form of Pietism took root in Württemberg. Already in previous years there had been a call for reform within the Church there. Johann Valentin Andreae (1586-1654), emphasizing the Lutheran concept of the sinfulness of humanity, maintained that, although salvation proceeded unmerited from God, justification leads a person to good works in response to the exhortations and example of Christ. That led to the further concept of promoting a proper preparation for justification through repentance. Accordingly, Andreae was able to effect some changes for the better in the lives of the Württemberger ministers and laity. Arndt and Böhme were also his inspiration as they had been for other Pietists. In this section of southern Germany Pietism evidenced a more moderate attitude than that which was centered at Halle. This may be accounted for by the greater toleration in the southwestern region influenced as it was by the Reformed teachings of French and Swiss Protestants. The geographical center of Württemberg Pietism was in Tübingen at the university. Conventicles sprang up both in academic circles and among the townsfolk in response to the same needs for a more fervent spiritual life as existed

elsewhere as a result both of the decimation caused by the Thirty Year's War and the apparent indifference of ecclesiastical and secular authorities to the people's plight. The university intellectuals at the *Stift* in Tübingen were supportive of the conventicles and the general spiritual reform undertaken by the Pietists.

The Tübingen theologians who were sympathetic to Pietism have come to be known as the *Schwäbische Väter* because of the long succession of their line. In many respects they reflected the emphases of Spener of a reformed, sometimes ascetic, life both for the individual and the institution. The best-known of these is Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752). Arndt and Gerhard were his inspiration and he became known as the "very soul of Swabian Pietism." Eschewing any concern for Francke's *Busskampf*, and some of Spener's more esoteric eschatological Scriptural speculations, Bengel gave himself to a study of the nature of the New Testament manuscripts. He is credited with having been the first to classify them according to "families" in relationship to what they represented. He insisted that nothing be read into them, and that nothing be omitted, when it came to their interpretation. His scholarly contributions provided Pietism with a greater intellectual integrity and reputation than it was credited as having had elsewhere.

RADICAL PIETISM

A radical form of Pietism is associated with Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) who performed the service of championing the contributions of the "heretics" to the Christian church. His views included the seeds of a full-blown separatist movement within Pietism. Into the stream of radical Pietism flowed the influences of Arndt, Böhme and quietism. This form of the movement was marked by a highly independent spirit. Extreme in its expressions and its tolerance it attracted the "malcontents" and those who were most willing to depart most widely from the established tradition within the Church. Many of the members of this group either voluntarily separated themselves from the Lutheran church or were driven out because of their excessiveness.

ZINZENDORF: MORAVIAN PIETISM

Moravian Pietism is associated with Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), its benefactor. It represents a separate community, although its leader preferred to regard it as an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*. The members were encouraged to keep and observe their Lutheran ties while at the same time participating in the intimate and enthusiastic worship of this off-shoot of the Bohemian Brethren. Zinzendorf was reared in a Pietistic atmosphere, Spener

having been a friend of his father and Nikolaus' godfather. He provided shelter for Moravian refugees who were driven from their homes because of their faith. Eventually a whole way of life and social organization was developed at Zinzendorf's estate at Herrnhut and he increasingly played a leadership rôle. He became a Bishop in this structure in 1737. The marks of the Moravians were a deep personal piety, a zeal for missionary expansion, and a sentimentality of expression in their theological writings and religious poetry.

THE CONTROVERSY WITH ORTHODOXY

Pietism was officially attacked somewhat early in its development when Georg K. Dilfeld (d. 1684) lashed out against Spener and his brother-in-law in the 1697 publication of his *Theosophia Horbio Speneriana*. Previous opposition to Pietism has already been noted as having been encountered by Spener in Frankfort in 1686 and by Francke in Leipzig in 1690 and again in Erfurt in 1691. Yet, Dilfeld's blast unleashed the stream of disputation that flowed on until it was finally stopped by Electoral edict in 1727 (the year of Francke's death) when the Saxon government decreed, for political reasons, an end to any further writings against Pietism. The debate which took place prior to that prohibition was often bitter and destructive. While it was proceeding, however, a new foe of the Church loomed on the

intellectual horizon and asserted its ascendancy, namely, the Enlightenment. This movement was being spurred on by the new rationalism which developed during this period. As the Church attempted to take on this new adversary, the battles between orthodoxy and Pietism waned and eventually disappeared.

The irony of the controversy between Pietism and orthodoxy lies in the fact that most of the Pietists considered themselves to be loyal Lutherans, expounding their founder's beliefs which the Church had lost sight of in its advancement toward an absolutism that was undergirded by dogmatic intractability. Much of the acrimony expended by the Orthodoxists against the Pietists was generated by a misunderstanding of some of the latter's positions and by a fear of losing their traditional prerogatives of dispensing the "official" interpretation of the Word and being displaced by autonomous and unauthorized structures and functionaries.

PIETIST HYMNODY

Pietism left its mark on the literature and hymnody of seventeenth and eighteenth century Germany. That influence had already begun as early as 1635 before any movement was known by that name. In that year a hymnal was published in Strassburg containing spiritually earnest concerns which were to become typical of Pietism in later years. They centered around such themes as the Christian, his spiritual

condition, his situation regarding his faith, and the circumstances of his Christian life.

Over the years 1704 - 1714 Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen (1670-1739) published a hymn collection in Halle which brought together the vast accumulation of Pietist expressions that were produced as Pietism developed its independent characteristics in contrast to the orthodoxy of Lutheranism. (Freylinghausen was the son-in-law and assistant of Francke, first in Glaucha and then in Halle.) This Halle edition eventually contained sixteen-hundred selections. It is divided into sixty sections and sub-divisions under such headings as reflect the personal and pragmatic concerns of the serious and deeply devotional believer. After beginning with the usual groupings with reference to the liturgical year and the events in the life of Christ and the Christian Church, the organization of this collection includes the following numbered sections:

24. true and false Christianity
25. human distress and corruption
26. true repentance and conversion
27. true belief
30. spiritual wakefulness
31. spiritual struggle and victory
32. purity
33. betrayal of the self and the world
34. eager desire for God and Christ
35. love for Jesus
36. brotherly and universal love
37. discipleship
38. secrets of the Cross
39. Christian composure
40. patience and steadfastness
41. surrender of the heart to God
42. divine peace

- 46. true wisdom
- 47. the ransomed life of the believer
- 51. the hope of Zion
- 53. heaven and the New Jerusalem.¹

Such individual and personal expressions, so directly and pragmatically stated, were not available in the traditional hymnals of Protestantism, especially those of Lutheranism. That lack was the motivation for the production of Pietist hymnals. While the other hymnals did contain pious and devotional verses, these were not considered by the Pietists as adequate vehicles for the expression of raptuous subjectivity and intimacy characteristic of their religious experience. And so the independent publication of their own religious song books was undertaken by them.

In addition to the Pietist's judging the traditional texts as inadequate they also found that the Lutheran chorale tradition lacked the spirit and temperament to express musically what they possessed in their souls. Many of the Pietists were given to a spontaneous outburst of song to convey their spiritual joy. The staid quality of the chorale tradition was too limiting for expressing the exuberance and joyous spontaneity which many Pietists sought to articulate. Furthermore, the music of orthodoxy was be-

¹Ingeborg Röbbelen, *Theologie und Frömmigkeit im deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Gesangbuch des 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), pp. 44-5.

coming more embellished and "worldly" under the influence of the Italian style and the development of a German opera at this time. In addition to objecting on moral grounds to this kind of music, the Pietists felt that the individualistic and personal emotions they experienced were better expressed through a simpler music. So they turned to the popular art songs and secular melodies for their tunes, finding themselves borrowing from the "world" after all.

The result of this combination of both this kind of text and melody, departing from the traditional church music, was often an over-sentimental, insipid, shallow product.

...the pietists...tolerated only simple devotional or sickly sentimental songs. Paradoxically enough, these songs were more often than not derivatives of shallow operatic airs and betrayed the very same secular influence that the Pietists attached so vehemently in theory.²

In 1714 the Wittenberg faculty remonstrated against the effect of this music by objecting to "the running and dancing manner whereby the heart was set in violent motion, yes, almost in fury, which fought against the seriousness and sublimity of the matter, against the customs of the evangelical church."³ Regarding this kind of congregational

²Manfred Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era, From Monteverdi to Bach* (New York: Norton, 1947), p. 272.

³Edwin Liemohn, *The Chorale through Four Hundred Years of Musical Development as a Congregational Hymn* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), p. 71.

music and its contribution to the decline of the art, Spitta remarks, "Pietism had finished off good church music so that when Bach came he had little to work with."⁴

ORTHODOX-PIETIST CONTRASTS

In summing up this discussion of the nature of Pietism one is reminded that it was a movement within the Lutheran church and that most of its leaders and adherents claimed loyalty to Luther. Spener refers to him as "our dear Luther," indicating that he did not consider his own position to be a break with this tradition. Even Francke insisted that those enrolled in his schools have a thorough grounding in Luther's teachings. Both Pietism and orthodoxy reflected a Christocentrism. Salvation was through faith in Christ who reveals and mediates God's grace. Both emphasized the need for justification by faith, but their perspectives differed. Orthodoxy related justification to its objective ground, placing stress upon God's act in Christ and the necessary belief by the seeker. Pietists related justification to subjective experience. While God's action in Christ is obviously prior, it must be appropriated through the penitential effort of the believer in a contrite wrestling of the soul. The emphasis was upon the content of the psychological experience in terms of its

⁴Ibid., p. 72.

spiritual depth and the lasting evidences of the regeneration thus wrought. In their understanding, the initiative was placed in the hands of the subject of God's grace to respond to His act in the Christ event. Hence there was a greater urgency pressed upon the individual regarding his salvation than appeared in the preaching of the orthodox Lutherans.

Regarding the Bible, Orthodoxists and Pietists alike looked to it as the authoritative and trustworthy source of revelation. Yet their approaches in interpretation differed. Orthodox Lutherans saw the Scriptures as the standard by which to judge the purity and rectitude of doctrine. Pietists searched their pages for the inspiration and guidance they afforded the new life into which they had been reborn. Among some Pietists the Bible was also treated as a source of esoteric teaching comprehensible only to the truly regenerated spirit. Others emphasized its eschatological and apocalyptic dimensions. Orthodox Lutheranism accepted the Word of God literally as recorded and transmitted, while certain segments of Pietism already foreshadowed the rationalistic analysis of the nature of the texts as various manuscripts were compared one to another in that approach.

Both these factions within eighteenth century Lutheranism accepted the sacraments as the necessary means of grace. The more radical Pietists began to doubt a soterio-

logical dependence upon them, however. More moderate representatives of the new emphasis upon piety, however, were critical of any tendency within orthodoxy that might reflect an *ex opere operato* implication in their dispensation of God's grace.

For Lutheran orthodoxy the formulas and symbols of that tradition were central in the expression and promulgation of doctrinal reliability. However, Pietism was more concerned with the condition of the heart and one's spiritual welfare than with normative doctrinal formulations. It was the individual's personal encounter with Christ that mattered most to the Pietists.

Stoeffler reminds us that both poles in the Pietist-orthodox controversy had their roots in historic Lutheranism.

(The) Reformed tradition and Melanchthonian elements within Lutheranism accounted for two emphases among some Lutherans. There were always Lutherans who put emphasis on the Christian life over against the prevailing Lutheran emphasis upon the truth content of the Christian message; there were always Lutherans who put emphasis upon the primacy of the Bible itself as its own theological norm over against the more typical Lutheran insistence on the authority of confessional symbols in the matter of biblical interpretation.⁵

Lutheran orthodoxy upheld the Church as the means of leading the individual to salvation through instruction, the sacraments, and preaching as he responded in faith. It

⁵F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), p. 96.

looked with suspicion upon Pietism and even charged it with outright heresy because of the latter's tendency toward displacing the Church. The Lutheran doctrine of the priesthood of believers was carried so far by the Pietists so that they claimed that the laity could function as priests to one another. Various forms of Pietism differed as to its acceptance or rejection of that assertion. There was disagreement as to whether to remain within the Church and supplement its offices by conventicles and Bible study or to break off from the ecclesiastical institution as established. The emphasis here was upon the individual and his needs, raising the question of the adequacy of the contemporary structures for fulfilling them.

The reawakening and Christian revival (by Pietism) was the result of the inner development of individual persons. The Church as institution became secondary if not irrelevant in religious life. Child baptism had no significance in the process of justification, and the Lord's Supper was not to be taken as the grant of the Church but as the symbol of the community of equally renovated souls. Nobody could be called a Christian minister because he was properly ordained and displayed formal doctrinal and moral rectitude as long as he had not undergone Christian revival.⁶

With such concepts and attitudes as set forth by the Halle Pietists and others it is clear how these two elements within the Lutheranism of the last third of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth came into log-

⁶Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany 1648-1840* (New York: Knopf, 1963), p. 139.

gerhead conflict during this period in Germany.

What Luther had emphasized regarding a vital relationship between God and the believer had been left behind by his successors' emphases upon strict dogmatic rectitude and ecclesiastical observance. The Pietists reclaimed Luther's contribution by their stress on subjective religious experience, yet not without fracturing the Church and causing wide-spread disregard for confessional conformity. Their extremists went too far, however. Yet the new spirit, initiated by Spener and his followers, while not effectively reforming the Church as they had hoped to, still brought a renewed vitality to religion and its application in the form of dedicated Christian lives. This influence was felt in the ensuing years in the life of the German nation and church, theologically, philosophically, culturally and even politically.

The seeds of the controversy that broke out publicly and officially with Dilfeld's printed attack upon Pietism at the end of the seventeenth century had already been planted as that century was beginning. It germinated and developed into a distinguishable movement from then on with its own characteristic attributes and history to form the Pietist movement. Founded upon an intense spirit of indiv-

idualism it came into conflict with the existing church in which it originated and yet from which it differed. Blume summarizes this process in his observation:

The deluge of prayerbooks, devotional tracts, and hymnals seem to indicate the great need for literature of spiritual edification and contemplation (at that time). The 'consciousness of personal Christianity' and the 'challenge of a cognizant conversion' (Holl) formed the foundation of a new tender, loving relation of the ego to God. The 'close attention to one's own self' led to a new frame of mind to a novel encounter with God and the universe. The self-conscious ego, responsible only to itself, sought its own concept of God and the universe, thereby seceding from the community to which, in Luther's opinion, the individual must always feel himself bound; it even became antagonistic to it. The individual's own will determined his relation to God and community. Never in the history of Lutheranism has there been so much talk about the ego and its inwardness as in this century of orthodoxy and mysticism. Here were the roots of the rich lyricism of the age and its music.⁷

The theological contrasts between orthodoxy and Pietism constitute the base for the contrasting expressions of that difference as this was manifested in their respective hymnody.

⁷Friedrich Blume, *Protestant Church Music, a History* (New York: Norton, 1974), p. 18.

CHAPTER 4

CONTRASTING EMPHASES IN THE HYMNS OF ORTHODOXY
AND PIETISM

LUTHER'S MEDITATION ON CHRIST'S PASSION

To illuminate the differences between Pietist and Orthodox hymns with respect to their treatment of Christ's passion reference is now made to Luther's sermon on the Passion, dated 1519.¹ What is found here and within several selected hymns will also be compared to the content of some of the chorales and libretto of the *St. Matthew Passion*. It had been the custom from the Middle Ages on into the time of the Reformation for worshipers to meditate on the Passion of Jesus during Holy Week. Luther sensed the need for providing some guidance to those who were doing this as he noticed many were so engaged for the wrong reasons and with wrong expectations. In his sermon which was widely circulated he lifted up fifteen considerations. The first three are negative ones as to how one should not approach this devotion. The remaining ones are his advice as to how such a meditation can be beneficial to the worshiper. (A Condensation of this sermon appears among

¹The quotations of Luther's sermon throughout this chapter are taken from Martin Luther, *Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), XLII, 7-14.

several Luther quotations at the beginning of this study.)

The purpose of meditating on Christ's passion is not fulfilled merely by being concerned with Judas' betrayal, nor is it accomplished by fixing on mementoes and amulets as a means of protection against misfortune. Mere lamentation, furthermore, is a misuse of the devotional opportunity that relating to the Passion affords the believer. Having made these three points Luther moves on to undertake his exposition of how to benefit from this ancient, seasonal devotional exercise.

"They contemplate Christ's passion aright who view it with a terror-stricken heart and a despairing conscience," Luther maintains in his fourth point. Sin is so serious a matter to God that a penalty must be paid. Furthermore, it so stirs up the wrath of God that only the most extreme payment satisfies the indictment. Only his sole and most precious Son avails as a sufficient penalty as God exacts punishment for the world's denial. Such a terrible sentence can beget only terror in the sinner's heart as he relates to the depth-seriousness of his crime.

The point follows that it is one's own sin that thus is the cause of Christ's suffering as we, in fact, are the ones who torture him. It is our deeds and evil thoughts that constitute the nails and thorn-crown that pierce the Savior's flesh. Hence, we are the ones to suffer his pain as he reveals our fate.

In the seventh paragraph Luther tells us that, even as Jesus reminded the wailing women, the lament ought to be over our own condition, not his. The consequences of our sins to ourselves must be viewed in dire earnestness and fright. This, then, leads us to the understanding that "the main benefit of Christ's passion is that man sees into his own true self and that he be terrified and crushed by this." In his eighth point Luther maintains that we are to be tormented in conscience just as Jesus suffered bodily on account of the crucifixion. This involves profound reflection and "great awe" of sin.

However, Luther continues in his ninth point, if one is not so moved by his sin and Christ's passion, he should fear the consequences of that callousness. "At very best, you will sink into this terror in the hour of death and in purgatory and will tremble and quake and feel all that Christ suffered on the cross." It is better to suffer this experience now, says Luther, than to postpone it to your deathbed. Moreover, it requires God's grace and inspiration to be able to do this since it is impossible out of our own resources to be able to devote ourselves sufficiently to Christ's suffering. Any other approach is wrong and fruitless as it depends, then, on our ability which is inadequate, being merely human.

As a tenth statement Luther claims that contemplating Christ's passion ("God's suffering") even for a short

time is far better than fasting a year, daily psalm recitation or a hundred masses. Similar to baptism, it can effect a "new birth." It means the banishment of all worldly concerns to experience the forsakenness that Christ knew.

Once again Luther insists that of himself man cannot bring about such a profound life-changing experience within himself. We must continue to pray for it and not despair at the lack of results, but it comes from Christ's passion itself. Sometimes dissatisfaction with life and depression are experienced as a result of what Christ went through even though we do not have this in mind. God can bring the benefits of Christ's passion to whom he will, regardless of one's involvement or lack of involvement in their contemplation or in penitential service.

Relief from despair generated by the heart's terror over contemplating the crucifixion comes as we free our consciences of sin by giving it over to Christ. In his twelfth point Luther maintains that this is the only way out. To engage in all kinds of other sought-after escapes such as indulgences, acts of penance and pilgrimages is but to torture oneself with falacious, fruitless means. Rather, as he points out in his thirteenth paragraph, our sins will be cast "unto Christ when (we) believe that his wounds and sufferings are (our) sins, to be borne and paid for by him." It is a matter of our belief that effects the transfer and our release of our sins' consequences to us. The end of

our torment over our sin is not the seeking of quieting our consciences through all manner of contrition and penance, but it comes only as we accept through faith the fact that "'God has made him (Christ) a sinner for us, so that through him we would be made just.' (II Corinthians 5:21)." God's act is a gift: Christ as sin-bearer is given. Our contrition does not remove our torment, but only our belief in the Gift of God does. We cannot deal with our sin ourselves; it drives us to despair. However, if we contemplate it resting on Christ, having been given over to him, he overcomes it through his resurrection and it is nullified. This we must believe.. Thus Christ destroys our sin and he no longer bears the pain or wounds or suffering that they once afflicted upon him - if we believe this.

Once again Luther remarks that we are dependent upon God to be able to believe this and so we must supplicate God for faith to be granted to us. We can encourage such faith in ourselves by no longer meditating upon Christ's sufferings, for these now have been swallowed up by his resurrection. You must "pass beyond that and see his friendly heart and how this heart beats with such love for you that it impels him to bear with pain your conscience and your sin." Our response, then, will be love for him which inspires confidence in ourselves, not of our own accord, but out of the love of God for us. So, in this, we have moved on to the center of God's heart which is love.

"Thus you will find the kind and paternal heart, and, as Christ says, you will be drawn to the Father through him." This is the meaning of "God so loved the world that ..." (John 3:16). When God is understood as kindness and love because of this redemptive process, then, through faith, one is born anew.

Luther concludes, making his fifteenth statement by saying, "After your heart has thus become firm in Christ, and love, not fear of pain, has made you a foe of sin, then Christ's passion must from this day on become a pattern of your entire life." The passivity of contemplation now turns to the activity of following Christ. If your circumstances are your problem, consider his. Your difficulties and annoyances are nothing in comparison. If you are tempted into vice, consider the scourging Christ suffers on your behalf. All your problems, temptations, vices, self-pity vanish as a result of viewing the Passion spectacle. He then inspires us to overcome our every "vice and failing." "Those who make Christ's life and name a part of their own lives are true Christians...Christ's passion must be met not with words or forms, but with life and truth."

EARLY REFORMATION HYMNS

In our hymn comparison we begin with a few from the early Reformation period from the pens of Luther (1487-1546) himself, Michael Weisse (?-1534) and Sebald Heyden (1494-

1516).

Luther's paraphrase of Psalm 130, *Aus tiefe Not schrei ich zu dir, Herr Gott*, includes in the second stanza that none of our efforts avail for forgiveness and that everyone must fear God because of sin. The third stanza states that one may not depend on one's own merit, and that God is our only hope. In these verses Luther expresses dependence upon God as the only source of forgiveness, even as he points this out in the ninth paragraph of his Passion sermon. It is to be understood, however, that this Luther hymn is not one regarding the Passion so much as it is one dealing with confession and contrition. His Easter hymn, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, in the first few stanzas better expresses some of the sermon in its reminder that our sins caused Christ's death and also that Christ's resurrection is the death of our sins.

Bach uses the hymn *O Mensch beweine deine Sünde gross*, as the closing chorus for the first part of the *St. Matthew Passion*. It is one of the great Passion hymns of the Lutheran tradition written by Sebald Heyden. The grief called for in recognition of one's own sin expresses Luther's sermon point that it is more one's own sins' causing Christ's sufferings that should cause us pain than the sufferings themselves. The first stanza also indicates that Christ left the Father's dwelling (lap) as God's gift in order to intercede for us on earth. He becomes the offer-

ing for us and bears our sins on the cross. Again, ours is the responsibility of his death. A word of thanksgiving is called for in the second stanza since the suffering was for us. While Luther does not explicitly mention gratitude in his sermon, it is implied throughout since all this was done for us, as the only way out, insofar as nothing could be done by ourselves; and, as a result, we receive new life. That is cause enough for thankfulness! Heyden's second stanza also lifts up the motive of love behind the sacrifice of the Son, as well as God's wrath striking death-blows upon sin.

The Weisse hymn, *O hilf, Christe, Gottes Sohn*, is a one-stanza Passion hymn, calling for help and acknowledging dependence upon Christ. It expresses the singer's contemplation of Jesus' death in fear and terror, particularly because of its cause (the sinner's sin). It, too, mentions gratitude in the form of a thank-offering given for the help that comes through Christ's bitter suffering. There is no reference, however, to the relief of fright or to the new life which derives from that relief on the basis of faith in God's love conveyed through Jesus' sacrifice.

The early Reformation hymns here reviewed express certain aspects of Luther's Passion meditation sermon as indicated, but they also fail to mention several others. They do not express that we must experience the suffering in conformity to Christ's experience, nor the point Luther

makes that we are to release the guilt to Christ who nullifies it through his final triumph. Faith in Christ's ability to release us from the effects of our own sin is not explicitly expressed, but it is implied in the very fact of the supplications which are being made in the form of the hymns themselves.

ORTHODOX HYMNS

The orthodox poets and hymn writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were not so concerned as Luther was with experiencing terror over what one's sin has brought about in Jesus' death as they were with what kind of a response to make now that the Savior has died for our sins. Johann Heermann's (1585-1647) hymn, *Herzliebster Jesu*, which was used by Bach a century later in the *St. Matthew Passion* as a chorale response three times, views the scene, asks why the innocent one should suffer, responds with acknowledgment of guilt and then responds in terms of what the believer (singer of the hymn) will do. The last stanza even anticipates the awarding of a heavenly crown. The response to Jesus' suffering is intellectual as to why this should be. It carries nothing of the terror in it that Luther indicates as beneficial in recognizing the seriousness of the sin's causing God to offer his Son as satisfaction for the guilt of man. The recognition that one has caused the suffering by one's sin is the answer given in

the third stanza to the question: "What is the cause of such torment?" But there is no bewailing one's condition as sinner, even though one admits guilt from head to toe (stanza six). The ninth stanza asks: "How can I make good thy deeds of love?" The plea is for Jesus' spirit and guidance for one to be able to shun the world and any sufferings of life in order to praise and follow the Savior. Finally, crowned in heaven, I will sing thy praise and thanks!

Valentin Ernst Löscher (1673-1749) Bach's contemporary and a Wittenberg professor of theology, sought a harmony with Halle Pietism, but finally he had to state his differences with the movement and opposed it. His hymn under consideration here, *Ich grüsse dich am Kreuzesstamm*, emphasizes the contemplative perspective of the singer coming to the cross. The first stanza carries a testimony to one's faith in Christ, though only in a short phrase. The main emphasis is on Christ's condition on the cross and his worthiness. Characteristically the second stanza refers to the response of the meditator on the Passion. "I follow thee through death and suffering, O prince of my blessedness, nothing shall separate me from thee." Christ leads the way and opens up the way of life for those who acknowledge him. He has died for us and makes nothing impossible; we can be confident even in the greatest need. Whosoever believes is saved. Luther's emphasis on faith is found

here, but certainly not the stress on the experience of terror, nor the necessity of laying the sin on Christ for his overcoming it. The concern is more for the believer's response to Jesus' act than the fact that it is given out of God's love.

The familiar Passion hymn of Paul Gerhardt, *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, concentrates on Jesus' suffering and his emaciated appearance. We must recall that it is actually a translation of St. Bernard's lengthy poem regarding the physical nature of Christ and the parts of his body as objects of meditative contemplation. In the fourth stanza Gerhardt confesses the sinner's guilt deserving of God's wrath and calls for the gracious mercy of Jesus' glance. The response of the believer is one of desiring to remain with the Savior and to identify with his suffering, taking him in one's own arms. Joy is expressed as a response to accepting Jesus' suffering as the means of one's salvation. In this hymn thanks are expressed to Jesus, addressed as dearest Friend. The singer asks that Jesus not leave him, even though one departs this life. When one fears death, may the Savior, who already has experienced the anguish and pain, deliver him. The final stanza bespeaks an aesthetic perspective: "Appear to me a shield for consolation at my death and may I see thy visage in my crucial need! There I desire to see thee, there will I - full of faith - press thee close to my heart: whoever dies in this way dies well

(wholesomely)."

The hymns of orthodoxy as here illustrated do not portray the condemnation of the sinner that is so prominent in Luther's sermon. The emphasis for the orthodox writers is more upon Christ's merit and what he has done as an historical act and not so much upon God's act in Christ given by grace. For the earlier Lutheran stress upon justification as an event of faith within the believer, the Orthodoxist has changed the emphasis to be more concerned with what he will do as a matter of extreme gratitude in response to what Christ has done for him. This regard for what is to happen in the life of the sinner as a result of acknowledging his debt to and dependence upon Jesus, while distinct from the Pietists' subjective concern, nonetheless might be construed as a bridge between the early Reformation perspective on Christ's passion and that of the Pietists. The former underlines God's act and the sinner's terror, relieved only, at last, by Christ's acceptance upon himself of the sin's consequence. In a sort of *unio cum Christo* one must then pattern his life after Christ's response to his tortured circumstance. The characteristic of the orthodox hymns is to leave the response to the Passion in the realm of self-motivated devotion and improved conduct as an offering or compensation for what Christ has done for the sinner. The Pietists, however, go still farther with the question of what one must do. They lay stress on the

inner condition of the person in the presence of the Passion and manifest an interest in the affective results within the repentant individual.

PIETIST HYMNS

The Pietist poets do not emphasize any terror on the part of the sinner's soul generated by his awareness of his sin. However, whatever seriousness of consequence his sin might have wrought is acknowledged in the wounds of Christ. Yet, these wounds are viewed more from the perspective of the believer identifying with them than that of the suffering Christ experiences. There is recognition that they were experienced for the sinner's sake and for his salvation. The response to this is to praise God's love offered in Christ for his forgiving grace. But the preoccupying concern among the Pietists is for the result of all this within the life and spirit of the believer. What occurs within him is where the interest is centered. Quiet, peace, rest, patience, a pacified conscience describe the state of the believer who accepts God's gift in Christ. The stress among the Pietists is not so much with reference to God's act of justification as it is in regard to the consequential evidences of regeneration in the life and experience of the one who claims Jesus as Savior.

The hymn of Gerhardt Tersteegen entitled *Ruhe hier, mein Geist*, begins with a circumstance diametrically op-

posed to Luther's fourth point. The mood and response instead of being one of terror when contemplating the Passion, as Luther emphasizes the consequence of sin, is one of rest and quiet meditation as one is called to behold the great wonder of God hanging on the cross. Tersteegen begins where Luther finally ends up: with the contemplation of God's love which removes the terror and provides the encouragement to the repentant heart. "See the love," he writes, "which impells him to you from the Father's lap." The second stanza points to Christ's suffering as the evidence of his love for the worshiper and details the extent of this suffering. Next follows the statement that "I (the sinner) ought to be experiencing this pain," one of the points Luther's sermon makes. "Because I am the beneficiary of Jesus' victory over sin, death and the power of hell, I silently bow and humble myself for this undeserved gain." Again the expressions have to do with how the sinner responds: "I give thee all I have and am; turn over to thee my heart and mind. I will remain faithful to thee, through thy grace, till death. I will not fear suffering, shame and loss; the fulfillment of thy will is my delicacy. Draw me by thy death's strength into thy death, let my body and my deeds be nailed with thee (upon the Cross) so that my will, soft and quiet, and love may be purified." The hymn continues with the plea that one's suffering may be a source of strength through Jesus' sufferings and that the heart

may never waver. When strength fails in temptation and sins frighten, let Jesus not forsake, but rather provide consolation at the time of death and judgment. The hymn ends with the eleventh stanza: "Jesus, I now commend my spirit into thy hand; let me live alone to thee until after the circumstances of suffering I may live with thee and behold thee crowned in the Father's kingdom (land)."

This hymn is typically Pietistic in several respects. It is concerned with the states and inner condition of the sinner and his response to the atonement. It refers to the quietude and stillness of mind and will (conscience) generated by a contemplation of the Passion. The phrases and expressions of the hymn are cast in somewhat exaggerated and sentimental concepts to express the intimacy and intensity of the religious experience of the worshiper confronted by the Cross and by his acceptance of his own guilt. It is a sharp contrast to Luther's concerns for the necessity of one himself suffering because of the suffering he has caused Christ. Moreover, it is oriented more to the response the sinner makes to Jesus' self-offer than to the fact that God justifies him by a divine act, as Luther expresses himself.

Another Pietist hymn which exemplifies these differences is one by Christian Renatus Zinzendorf (1727-1759), the son of the more famous benefactor and leader of the Moravians at Herrnhut, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

The hymn, *Marter Christi, wer kann dein vergessen?*, is replete with sentimental and aesthetic allusions such as "ocean of love," "nourished by thee," "lap (bosom) of grace," "binding ourselves to thy martyrdom." The successive stanzas all have to do with the relationship of the worshiper to the Martyr and Faithful Shepherd, hurrying to the wounds for strength, consolation, refreshment, peace and quiet.

Nikolaus Zinzendorf has written a hymn that combines the act of faith with the resolution of a redeemed life of thankfulness and service. It is found in the section of the hymnal entitled "Faith," and also contains the characteristic "sentimental" Pietistic traits. "Christ's blood and righteousness are my jewelry (ornamentation) and garb of praise in which I will appear before the Lord when I enter heaven. The innocent holy Lamb which died for me on the crude Cross I acknowledge as Lord and Christ. I believe that his precious blood (is) the most all-treasured benefit; and that it fills God's treasure-trove and avails eternally in heaven. And if I, through the Lord's merit, also win against all evil so faithfully in his service and no longer trespass until the grave (my death): then I will, when I come to him, not think about (my) goodness and piety, but: here comes a sinner, who happily was blessed because of the ransom (paid)." The hymn continues with an intention to help Christian folk, to remember God's offer given in

love, with praises and a supplication of his mercy for the whole world.

As we contrast these expressions with early Reformation and later Orthodox statements regarding the Passion we reach these conclusions. In Luther's emphasis and that of his most immediate followers we find forgiveness given as an act of God and justification as the result of the event of faith within the believer. The later followers in orthodoxy, however, place more stress on the merit of Christ historically and objectively constituting the satisfaction for the world's sins. Luther places less emphasis on the personal act of repentance, in contrast to which both the hymns of orthodoxy and Pietism are concerned with just that in terms of what the sinner, confronted with the suffering Christ, vows to do in response. Repentance is the work of the sinner, who while he does not react with the terror that Luther describes, acknowledges his responsibility for Jesus' plight, and out of his own spiritual and psychological resources offers his plaintive supplications. In this acknowledgement, the Pietists refer rather consistently to the wounds of Christ, identification with which appears to have a salutary effect upon the sinner. Yet this is not the same emphasis as in Luther when he enjoins the worshiper to experience the torture of Jesus in order to accept his just punishment for his sin. The movement of response revealed in these hymns from early

Reformation times to the position of the Pietists through orthodoxy is one of increasing personalization and subjectivism until it reaches its most pronounced form in the Pietists.

BACH'S *ST. MATTHEW PASSION* RELATED TO LUTHER'S SERMON

Bach undertakes the recovery of the older Lutheran tradition in his rendition of Matthew's Passion account. He expresses his traditionalism by turning to the verbatim Scriptural account instead of employing the paraphrases that were offered by the popular librettists of the time and which his contemporaries used in their musical compositions. Furthermore, Bach used the Lutheran chorales of the great church tradition in his work to convey the response of the faithful community during the contemplation of the Passion. These were the treasures out of the later sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. He did not use any texts of the Pietists. For the other commentaries upon the Passion scenes Bach used the words of his librettist, Picander, to whom he recommended the style and content of the orthodox Lutheran pastor-poet, Erdmann Neumeister (1671-1756), who influenced the author with whom Bach collaborated in Weimar, Salomo Franck (1659-1725). It is believed that Bach, as will be mentioned in more detail later, exercised a considerable influence over this librettist who supplied the non-narrative text for this *Passion*.

Yet Bach's creation contains some exceedingly intimate and personal identification with the pain of Jesus both in anticipation of and in the actual experience of the Cross. From a general awareness of the dominant traits of Pietist expression one might assume an influence from this source upon Bach. However, in referring to Luther's 1519 sermon concerning meditating upon the passion of Christ we can see elements in Bach's treatment that fulfill what Luther had in mind, though not entirely with reference to each point Luther makes. Furthermore, having considered several orthodox hymns we find there additional emphases that Bach's *Passion* also incorporates. These account for the feeling-ful expressions of empathy with Jesus' sufferings that make up many of the recitative ariosos and the arias that flow from Bach's spirit. The excessiveness and sentimentalism that are associated with many Pietist expressions are not found in Bach.

Luther's stress on God's condemnation of the sinner and the terror he should experience over the fact that he caused the horror of the crucifixion of God's dear Son is not found in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. The perspective Bach brings conforms more to the last points in Luther's sermon on the Passion. Chronologically the crucifixion is over and Easter has occurred. Therefore, the worshiper already knows he is the beneficiary of God's forgiving love

achieved through the atonement. However, in the *Passion* Bach provides what Luther addresses himself to in the sermon, namely, a manner in which to contemplate the meaning of Jesus upon the Cross. The opening chorus of the composition is an invitation, actually a supplication, extended to the Daughters of Zion, to assist in keeping vigil during the Holy Week episodes which end in the crucifixion, and to help with the mourning. Already in this opening statement the notions of our guilt and the fact that all this was done out of the motivation of love are announced.

While the element of terror over our sins is missing from Bach's presentation of the Passion meditation, and hence there is no expression of despair for ourselves as terror-struck, the libretto does contain laments of pain and grief, suffering and sorrow. But these are related to Christ's experiences, not ours for having caused them. The blame is acknowledged as ours, as Luther says it must be. In selection Number 16 which is the Gerhardt chorale, *O Welt sieh hier dein Leben*, Bach uses stanza six to give the response to the Disciples' question regarding the identity of the betrayer. "I am the one," the "congregation" sings, in acknowledgement of the guilt. Here the thought is extended by these verses into Luther's sixth point that we are the ones to suffer what Christ is going through on the Cross. However, the remainder of Luther's thought in point five, that our deeds and evil thoughts are the

instruments of pain, is not articulated here by Bach.

It has already been mentioned that Bach takes up Luther's injunction that the weeping ought to be for our condition as the ones who cause Jesus' death. The author of the sermon sets this forth in his seventh paragraph. Bach does this by means of the early Reformation chorale, *O Mensch, beweine dein Sünde gross* (No. 35). Beyond that, however, all the other lamentations are over the suffering Christ which endures as these stab into the heart of the spectator as well. The relationship is one of sympathy, even empathy, regarding Christ's torture: it is not pain experienced by us because of our sin. Selection Number 25, *O Schmerz! Hier zittert das gequälte Herz!*, expresses descriptively the agony of Gethsemane from which there is no escape nor for which any mitigating comfort is forthcoming. The following chorale, stanza three of Heermann's, *Herzliebster Jesu*, again takes up the theme of the believer's guilt and the protest against Jesus' suffering. The same cry of inconsolability is voiced by the alto arioso-recitative, *Ach, Golgatha, unseliges Golgatha!*, in which the undeserved wretchedness of Jesus' death is lamented.

The eighth paragraph of Luther's sermon deals with the concern that awareness of our sin should be terrifying to us. There is no recognition of this in Bach's *Passion*, as has already been stated, since the perspective already at this point borrows from the truth of the resurrection.

Luther goes on to say that in awe before our sin we ought to "conform" to Christ's suffering, that is, experience it ourselves in torment of conscience. The result of acknowledging one's sin conveyed by the *St. Matthew Passion* is not such a torment, but is similar to the response made by the orthodox hymn writers. It is not in terms of what I feel in condemnation, but what I will do, strengthened and encouraged by Christ's sacrifice for me. Accordingly, in several selections Bach, through his music and his librettist's words, makes offerings to the Savior. While the heartrending aria Number 10, *Buss und Reu*, does express inner torment ("Repentance and remorse grate the sinning heart in two"), it also presents an offering: "may my tear drops be an acceptable ~~embalment~~, faithful Jesus, for you." Although this scene has to do with the anointing of Jesus and the Disciples' objection, it already foreshadows the eventual requirement for this act. Such is the response of the believer to that scene and that anticipation as the tears constitute an anointing.

Another such response as to what the believer will do in relationship to his Savior comes after Jesus predicts Peter's denial and the latter's rejection of it. In Number 23 Bach uses Paul Gerhardt's verses from the sixth verse of *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* to indicate that the individual worshiper in the congregation will remain steadfastly at Jesus' side, whate're betide. Furthermore,

selection Number 19 is made in response to the Last Supper scene as the soprano sings her presentation song: "I will offer thee my heart, sink thyself into it, my Savior, I will immerse myself in thee." Another example is seen in the response to Jesus' request that his disciples watch with him at Gethsemane, in which the faithful believer sings Number 26: "I will watch by my Jesus." (The chorus here comments on the fact that the Disciples were not able to stay awake: "So then - because of my vigil - our sins will sleep." This illustrates the masterful expressive and interpretive powers of Bach!) The aria with chorus continues with the interpretation that Jesus' anguish provides the atonement for our sins and death and that his mourning fills me with joy. Once more Bach leaves the immediate scene of deep grief to import from another the blissful state of being forgiven. Here the composer is anticipating Luther's fourteenth point that after the suffering is over we need no longer view the torture but should contemplate God's kindness and love for us.

Still another example of the believer's response to Christ's suffering are Numbers 61 and 75. In the first of these follows the episode in which the crowd demands Barabbas and Jesus is led out to be crucified. The aria expresses offers of tears and heart since nothing else can be done to save the Savior. The aria Number 75 comes after Jesus' body is given to Joseph of Arimathea for burial. The bass

soloist sings that he will make of his heart a tomb, after it is cleansed, and bury Jesus within himself. The cares and concerns for the world are to be evicted to make room for Jesus! There he will take his sweet rest. These selections, among still others in the *St. Matthew Passion*, are all expressions of identification with the crucified Christ, not in accordance with the Lutheran and early Reformation emphasis upon joining him in his suffering, but in line with the orthodox model of what the believer will do in response to Jesus' enduring the Cross for him.

There is no reference in this *Passion* to Luther's warning in paragraph nine against postponing acknowledgment of guilt and trusting in one's own ability to confess. Only God enables us to do so, the Reformer maintains. However, these concerns do not appear in Bach's work. Points ten and eleven also are not represented in any portion of this composition. There is no expression of the merit of contemplating the Passion nor the fact that God ultimately is responsible for our undertaking such a contemplation.

In the sermon paragraphs twelve and thirteen, Luther says we must release our guilt to Christ through faith. Then, because of our belief that his wounds are ours, he by his resurrection nullifies the consequence of our sins. The soprano in recitative, Number 18, while weeping for the Savior who will be betrayed and led to his death, is gladdened by the testament of his body and blood

- as offered in the Sacrament. This, in a sense, is a statement of faith and a release of guilt to Jesus. However, in this section of his sermon Luther also gives the warning that if one does not fully believe that Jesus' sufferings are our sins, "but (you) presume to still your conscience with your contrition and penance, you will never obtain peace of mind, but will have despair in the end." In this statement he is concerned about those who assume that the prescriptions and rituals of penance are effective for deliverance without fully accepting the requirement of faith to effect the atonement. There lies here, however, a hint of criticism of those who in later times were more concerned for the struggle of the soul in contrition and the affective states of the penitent spirit to bring about the stilling of the conscience - namely, the Pietists. Bach, himself, on the other hand, using the dogmatic materials of the catechism and creed as the basis for several of his compositions, and dedicating his efforts to the didactic function of the liturgy in the service of nurturing and expressing faith, reflects the strategic place to which the German Reformer assigns the believer's faith.

The last two concerns of Luther's sermon have to do with responding to God's love offered through Christ's passion once it has been accomplished and then taking Christ as the pattern for one's daily life. The final

recitative in the *St. Matthew Passion* (No. 77) has each of the soloists contribute a statement, each of which is followed by the chorus singing, "My Jesus, Good night!" The tenor states: "The effort is expended which our sins caused him." It is done. The same perfect tense is reflected in the earlier recitative numbered 74 when it is reported: "The reconciliation is now made with God, since Jesus has accomplished his Cross (self-offering)." Here is the evidence that Luther cites in saying that God's love is greater than our sin. This is maintained in the fifth stanza of his hymn, *Aus tiefer Not*, in which he sings: "Whether our sins are many, greater still is God's grace; there is no limit to the succor of his hand, regardless of the magnitude of the damage (sin)." Bach accompanies this theme by quoting Johann Rist's (1607-1667) sixth stanza of his hymn, *Werde munter, mein Gemüte*: "...thy mercy and grace are far greater than the sins I constantly see within myself." These are the words of the selection number 48 in the *Passion*, sung as a chorale which comes after Peter's denial and the subsequent arioso recitative, *Erbarme dich*, "Have mercy, my God."

As Luther holds up the life and suffering of Christ as the paradigm to the Christian beset with temptation and distress, so Bach in the *St. Matthew Passion* relates to the life of the sinner the way in which Jesus confronts his tribulations. When Jesus is silent before his accusers the

tenor recitative (No. 40) cites this as an example to us. Jesus is silent before the lies "in order to show us thereby that his merciful will is humbled for our sakes and that we should imitate him under the same circumstances of pain and, as a consequence, keep our silence." Another example of patterning our lives after Jesus comes in the very next selection (No. 41), an aria, which calls for patience in spite of the barbs of lying tongues we may have to endure together with taunts and scourging. The recitative Number 65, sung after Simon of Cyrene is recruited to carry the Cross, volunteers: "Gladly will our flesh and blood be compelled to (accept) the Cross; the more it brings benefit to our souls, the more we experience its weight." It is the cross-assumption by Jesus, actually, that inspires our acceptance, since it is his benefits that come to us as we relate to him in faith and thereby are enabled to bear our burdens.

The *Passion according to St. Matthew* which Bach composed returns us in large measure to the spirit of Luther's advice regarding one's approach to meditating upon Christ's suffering and death. However, the emphasis provided by the orthodox poets upon the believer's response to these events has found its way into Bach's presentation by means of the chorales and a spirit more expressive of receiving God's gift of love than of being condemned by the judgment of our sin. This is the source of the intimacy

and devotionism mediated by this work of Bach, who, while avoiding Pietist ingredients, expresses an intense piety akin to theirs.

These contrasting emphases as here outlined, with the exception of the Pietist, contribute to the spirit and expressive forms of Bach's work. In a sense they form a progression which, when they reach Bach, he returns to the German Reformer.

While Luther's hymns, such as *A mighty fortress is our God*, were intended as expressions of the faith of a congregation, Gerhardt's hymns were the profession of faith of the individual believer in the objective truths of Christian religion before the congregation... Under the influence of Pietism the Church lost significance, and the relation of the individual soul and God became the center of imaginary thinking again... this later religious poetry...was not only more mystical but also more subjective in character.²

A review of the life of Johann Sebastian Bach will serve to trace the influences and encounters with Lutheran orthodoxy and Pietism in which he was involved as further commentary on the nature of his work and how it relates to these two facets in the life of the eighteenth century church in which he served.

²Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany 1648-1840* (New York: Knopf, 1963), pp. 166-7.

CHAPTER 5

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH:

HIS RELATIONSHIP TO ORTHODOXY AND PIETISM

BACH'S STUDENT YEARS

On March 21, 1685 at Eisenach, Johann Sebastian Bach was born into a family of musicians which had been successful in the art for over two centuries. Heredity, training and environment had conspired consistently over these years to bring the best of this family's succeeding generations to a culmination in the genius of this particular member.

The first traceable ancestor of the family, Veit Bach, a baker, came from Wechmar in Thuringia, that section of Germany from which Luther also came. After a move to Hungary, Veit returned to Wechmar when his new neighbors were found to be intolerant of Protestants.

The father of Johann Sebastian held the post of Town Musician in Eisenach. At that time the livelihood of musicians was dependent upon their employment in civil, royal or ecclesiastical service as they exercised their abilities for the town council or princely court. Such positions as these were held by several generations of Bachs.

At the age of ten Bach became an orphan, having already lost his mother the year before his father's death.

He and another brother went to live with their older brother, Johann Christoph, in the town of Ohrdruf, south of Gotha. This town was the seat of a vehement debate between orthodoxy and Pietism because of the presence of champions of both parties resident there. It had gained the reputation of harboring the more extreme followers of Pietism as they fled other locations. However, orthodoxy held its own, especially in the school Bach attended. The introduction which Bach received to Pietism in his younger years was within this context of controversy, and the influential forces of his life at that time expressed themselves as staunchly opposed to it.

At the Ohrdruf *Klosterschule* Bach was steeped in Lutheran orthodoxy. According to Chiapusso, "Bach gained final confirmation of his unwavering faith in his theology classes."¹ The basic theological text was Leonhard Hutter's *Compendium Locorum Theologicorum ex Scripturis et Libro Concordiae Collectum*, written to serve the interests of orthodoxy.² It was a non-argumentative text intended for indoctrination, commissioned in 1610 by Duke Christian II of Saxony and written in conformity with the *Formula of Concord* of 1577. The *Formula* was memorized by every educated Lutheran, and Bach was examined in it when he applied for the

¹Jan Chiapusso, *Bach's World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 24.

²see page 9.

post of Cantor in Leipzig in 1723. Every teacher at the Ohrdruf school was required to subscribe to the *Formula*.

It is to be assumed that Bach continued his theological studies at the *Ritteracademie* in Lüneburg. Having received a scholarship, he enrolled there in 1700. There the school's cantor was assigned to instruct theology as well as music, just as was the case in Ohrdruf. Commenting on these years of study, Chiapusso states,

...the courses that Bach took in school had a lasting influence on his life and art. The content of the texts he studied provided an intellectual basis for his faith, and he often turned to them even long after he had left school. When Bach was an old man and an esteemed musician, he returned to the studies of his youth and these protected him from the dangerous doubts raised by the increasingly popular rationalists. But perhaps more basic to an understanding of early influences on Bach the artist was the belief among all Bach's teachers that the purpose of all education was religious.³

This influence together with his interest in religious studies as well as what must have been a sensitive and intense spiritual nature led Bach into the service of the Church which he recognized as the context in which both to develop and dedicate to the highest degree his abilities as a musician.

BACH'S EARLY SERVICE TO THE CHURCH

Relating his educational background to the religious purposiveness of Bach's music, it is said of him,

³Chiapusso, pp. 16-7.

his spirituality and his continuous regeneration by faith form the substance of Bach's exalting art, and are the source of the endless stream of metaphysical yet utterly human music that flowed from his pen. He expresses his sincere and very real spiritual experience in his music, which was at all times in the service of his deity. To his pupils he often quoted the words of Erhard Niedt: 'The sole purpose of harmony is the Glory of God; all other use is but idle jingling of Satan.'⁴

The inscriptions and dedications on both his sacred and secular sacred music are well known: *Jesu Juva* (J J), *Soli Deo Gloria* (S D G), and *In Nomine Jesu* (I N J).

By entering the service of the Church, Bach departed from the background of many of his forebears. Most of them were employed in the secular realm as guild musicians and civil servants, which was an option also open to him. From school days on Bach regarded music as "a harmonious euphony to the glory of God."⁵ His time in Lüneburg enabled him fully to experience music as the handmaid of religion in the service of the Church. The organ was his consuming interest at the time, and he had ample opportunity to hear the great literature of the masters - German, Dutch, and Italian - played by the giants of the North German tradition both in Lüneburg and later in Hamburg and Lübeck. He applied for and was chosen to fill an organist's post at

⁴Ibid., pp. 26-7

⁵Charles Sanford Terry, *The Music of Bach* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 2.

Sangerhausen in the fall of 1702. However, after the choice was made, it was countermanded in favor of another candidate. After this disappointment he accepted a position at Weimar in April 1703 as a member of the ducal chamber orchestra. This was clearly a case of grasping the first opportunity available after his Sangerhausen disappointment. Within five months, however, he was back at the organ, having been called to the newly-installed instrument at the St. Boniface church in Arnstadt.

ARNSTADT: 1703

Having pursued his duties faithfully in his new position, Bach was granted a leave of absence to observe the work of his older contemporaries. Upon returning, after extending the leave on his own, he met with the disfavor of the town council for the liberty he had taken. Having studied the art of Buxtehude in Lübeck, he put into practice what he had observed and learned there. His virtuoso improvisations confused and greatly disturbed both the Arnstadt congregation and consistory to the point of creating a controversy with their young organist. As Bach increasingly felt the limitation of this situation he accepted the offer to become the organist of St. Blasius' church in Mühlhausen in June 1707.

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MÜHLHAUSEN: 1707, CONTROVERSY AND "DECLARATION"

Frohne-Eilmar Conflict

It was at Mühlhausen that Bach came to a full realization of his vocational aim, actually stating it in the form of a declaration to be known by the name of that town. His high hopes for his new position, however, soon foundered on the rocks of religious controversy which he encountered here. This was over the growing influence of Pietism in this town. The two foci of the conflict were the church where Bach was organist, St. Blasius', and St. Mary's church. At St. Blasius' Pastor Johann Adolph Frohne had, since his coming to that pulpit in 1691, espoused an intense piety and openly avowed his leanings toward the Pietists. Yet he was also clear to state that he had no sympathy for their contentiousness and extremism. Bach's predecessor at the organ of that church, Johann Georg Ahle (1651-1706), was of the same persuasion as Frohne. When Pastor Georg Christian Eilmar arrived at St. Mary's in 1699 he publicly attacked the position of Frohne. At that time, as Bach arrived, the controversy was being renewed and flared up again.

Scholars disagree as to the degree of any alliance between Bach and Eilmar, but it is significant that the organist enlisted Eilmar as the sponsor for his first child, Wilhelm Friedemann, at the baptism in 1710. The orthodox contender in this conflict also became the author of several

libretti which Bach used for the composition of some of the cantatas he composed at Mühlhausen. The general view is that Bach sided with Eilmar rather than with his own pastor, Frohne, as difficult and embarrassing as this might have been for Bach.

Schrade sums up the opposing views in this conflict in this manner.

(Pietism represented) a new inwardness of the religious man; the introversion of the individual who makes his own inner self the very source of grace and religious intensity. But this subjective 'inwardness' imperilled the forms of religious life as organized and guided by the church. On the other side stood the formalism of Lutheran orthodoxy. Since 1691 Pastor Frohne had advocated for the church of St. Blasius the new intensified religious attitude; from the very start, however, he made it clear that in recognizing the Pietistic movement he did not subscribe to certain disintegrating tendencies, a by-product caused by undisciplined fanatics and seditious hotheads.⁶

Already in these early years Bach showed himself as the traditionalist who appreciated order and form and who abhorred "the immoderate exhuberance and revolutionary forces associated with the extremists of Pietism which were bound to destroy the values of the past and the true sense of tradition."⁷

Bach's lining up with Eilmar, to whatever extent, Kantzenbach attributes to the Pietist attitude toward the

⁶Leo Schrade, *Bach, the Conflict between the Sacred and the Secular* (New York: Merlin Press, 1966), pp. 148-9.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 7.

more elaborate style of Bach's compositions which claimed that his church music and cantatas were a secularization (*Verweltlichung*) of the worship service.⁸ It is true that the congregation at St. Blasius' church was used to a service quite different from what Bach introduced. It had grown accustomed to what was offered during thirty-three years of service rendered by their native Johann Georg Ahle. The latter's father, Johann Rudolph Ahle (1625-1673), had also been organist and composer for this church. He had written a treatise, *Kurze und deutliche Anleitung zu der lieblich und löblichen Singerkunst*. Johann Georg issued a new edition of this work in Mühlhausen in 1704. The people's predilections were thus reaffirmed just three years before Bach's arrival at St. Blasius' by reading that elaborate church service music amounted to "siren songs disturbing meditation, mixing the world's vanity with the sacred, and corrupting the gold of divine truth."⁹

Bach's dilemma consisted in the fact that though Frohne's Pietistic emphasis expressed the warmth and subjectivism of a personal piety also associated with the texts

⁸Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Orthodoxie und Pietismus* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1966), p. 93.

⁹cf. Karl Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 26.

Bach was employing and was to use later for his compositions, the tradition of the particular church in which he was currently employed would have nothing to do with the musical style in which Bach expressed himself. Furthermore, it was the orthodox setting with its liturgy in which his service could better flourish and with greater acceptance. Generally speaking, with the exception Bach encountered at St. Blasius' of course, the heritage of Luther with his deep appreciation for the various forms of music pressed into the service of the church afforded Bach the widest opportunity for exercising his musical experiments and innovations for the sake of stirring up the religious spirits of the congregation.

Bach's Intended Reform

In this setting Bach announced his intention to reform church music. Already in Arnstadt, in 1703, Bach had given an indication of this purpose of closely relating the liturgy to appropriate and meaningful compositions by writing his cantata, *Denn du wirst meine Seele nicht in der Hölle lassen* (No. 15). His visit to Lübeck in 1705 had introduced him to what Buxtehude was accomplishing by composing musical concertos for the Evening Music based on the liturgical tradition. In this the individual composer was joining his creative genius to the objective entity of the church and its service. Buxtehude thus produced musical

settings for three Sundays in Advent and the last two in Trinity, leaving behind any sense of impersonal or arbitrary rendition and providing in its place a service that reflected a definite liturgical sense. So he fulfilled, and Bach noted, what Schrade calls "the true aim of the individual (church) composer to use his music to organize the service."¹⁰ Accepting this purpose, Bach, more than any composer

possessed the inner force to create church music in the spirit of Luther's church without breaking up the liturgy with an excess of the subjective, and by taking liberties with it as men are wont to do. Again, there has been no other musician whom the problem and responsibility toward church and liturgy have stirred so deeply as they did Bach.¹¹

The "Mühlhausen Declaration" 1708

The situation at Mühlhausen did not provide Bach with the appropriate environment in which to fulfill his vocation as a church musician as he saw it. Both his philosophy and his style were under attack there. It was his "intention to correlate the liturgy and the music (which) was wholly in line with his Christian faith and vocation."¹² Seeking another position, Bach was accepted as court organ-

¹⁰Schrade, p. 37.

¹¹Ibid., p. 39.

¹²Paul S. Minear, "Matthew, Evangelist, and Johann, Composer," *Theology Today* XXX (1973), 245.

ist at Weimar which afforded him a better living and an alternative to what he considered his opposition at Mühlhausen. Before leaving, however, on June 25, 1708 he addressed himself to the members of the Mühlhausen town council with a petition for dismissal to accept the new responsibility. This "Mühlhausen Declaration" sets forth, among other matters, Bach's intention regarding his reorganization of church music:

...I have always kept one end in view, namely, with all good will to conduct a well regulated church music to the honor of God, in agreement with your desires, and besides to assist, so far as possible to my humble ability, the church music that has grown up in almost all the neighboring villages, which is often better than the harmony produced here...Furthermore, I have laid before you the report of the defects in the organ needing repairs, and at all times and in all places have with pleasure fulfilled the duties of my office. Yet this has not been done without opposition, and at present there is not the slightest appearance that things will be altered...

Now God has so ordained it that a chance has unexpectedly been presented to me, in which I foresee...the more effective pursuit of my aims in the due ordering of church music without interference from others...¹³

The conflict in Bach was that he appreciated the need to reform church music to fulfill the liturgy, yet in his present position he felt thwarted in his aim. The other problem was that the invitation which "rescued" him from Mühlhausen officially involved his playing the organ at Weimar without being responsible for the entire service.

¹³Geiringer, p. 28.

The latter responsibility was in the hands of another, as will be pointed out later. In any case, it was clear to Bach that to make any progress whatsoever, this was his better opportunity than to remain at Mühlhausen.

But just what was the situation musically within the Church that, according to Bach, required so drastic a revision? As a result of the increasing Pietist influence as well as the havoc wrought by the Thirty Year's War within the administration of the Lutheran church, its liturgy and music fell into disarray and lacked any uniformity from one congregation to another. In Bach's time the Church had still not recovered from the disorganized situation that prevailed throughout the former century.

The well established forms of church discipline, doctrine and traditional liturgy, all of them permeated by overwhelming piety and an intoxicating immersion in the *unio mystica* - these were the spiritual conditions under which musicians of the period worked. Political conditions could not have been more insecure. War and confessional disputes disorganized all civic order. The church was torn up into many territorially separated shreds, each of which had its own church administration, its own liturgy, its own hymnbook, and even its own confessional writing. Spiritual and political tensions increased and ties of custom and convention dissolved as the chronological distance from Luther grew, and as the new century became more imbued with the new piety, its individual perception of God, its ecstatic self-consciousness, and its increasing assertion of the (individual) personality. The unity of the Lutheran church became more and more a thing of the past; not all the severity of orthodox dogmas and church discipline could prevent musicians from saturating themselves and their music with the spirit of an individualistic perception of God...Regulations had only local validity, calling for restraint in the use of 'songs imported from Italy, in which biblical texts are torn and hacked up into small pieces by fast runs through the gullet,' as well

as restraint in the all-too-frequent displays of virtuosity on the part of the organists. These attempts at restriction met with little success. When rulers intervened, they were content to incorporate the church organization into the framework of the state; they hardly ever paid any attention to liturgy and music.¹⁴

Bach's intention to reorganize church music was in response to these conditions which persisted on into his day. Pietism had brought the traditional liturgical forms to their disintegration and the increasing rationalism in Bach's time was completing the process toward a total decay. He understood that it was the responsibility of the musician of the church to provide such vehicles as would interpret the biblical message in a devotional as well as subjectively comprehensible manner. Such a manner was related to the spirit of Pietism. On the other hand, because of its emphasis upon teaching, the liturgy, a more regulated service, and its rich musical tradition, the creation of such devotional and didactic church music was better accomplished within the orthodox framework.

...it is this contradictory situation that wrested from (Bach) the final decision. There was no escape for the man placed in the midst of antagonistic parties. As a matter of fact, he had no true choice; he did the only thing he could - he left (Mühlhausen).¹⁵

The Mühlhausen statement came at the time when Georg Friedrich Händel (1685-1759) was making his decision to

¹⁴Friedrich Blume, *Protestant Church Music, a History* (New York: Norton, 1974), pp. 190-1.

¹⁵Schrade, pp. 56-7.

step aside from the German musical milieu and direct his efforts to opera and oratorio in the Italian style. He had earlier gone to Italy in 1706 and eventually finally fulfilled his vocation in England where he died. Bach, however, "dedicated himself to sacred music as the final opportunity to give expression to religion bound up with the church."¹⁶

WEIMAR II: 1708

At Weimar Bach became the court organist and *Kammermusicus* for Duke Wilhelm Ernst (1662-1728), the brother of Duke Johann Ernst (1664-1707) whom had earlier served for a few months at the very beginning of his career in 1703. Although the position of *Kapellmeister* was not vacant and Bach at first was not involved in the composition of church music, still the Weimar court was more hospitable to his aims and persuasion than was the situation at Mühlhausen. Wilhelm Ernst was a great lover of music, but had an austere and stern personality. He was seriously religious and staunchly orthodox, promising Bach a greater opportunity for fulfilling his goal. Other advantageous aspects of Weimar for Bach included the presence there of Johann Christian Lorbeer, the Duke's poet laureate, who was also a great champion of music. So enthusiastic was Lorbeer for

¹⁶Ibid., p. 13.

the cause of music that he entered into public debate in opposition to Pietist attacks on the art. He was a great supporter of Bach. The classicist, Johann Matthais Gesner (1691-1761), was also an avid lover of music and supported Bach at Weimar. Bach was later to be associated with him a short time at the *Thomasschule* in Leipzig where Gesner was the rector from 1730 to 1734 while Bach was the *Kantor* there. Still another associate at Weimar was Salomo Franck (1659-1725) who was a poet but whose appointed post was that of secretary to the Consistory. Bach collaborated with him in setting his librettos to the music of his cantatas.

In the art of composition the choice of text was clearly a matter that rested solely in the composer's hands. From those texts which were chosen we may possibly deduce something of the inner spirit of the composer who uses them. Artistic creation is a subjective matter involving the depths of the artist if the product is to be anything more than mere superficial work undertaken for the most banal of motivations. The process of selectivity would thus involve the inmost responses of the spirit to the materials at hand from which the choice is to be made. Furthermore, most artists have a recurring theme or style or mode of treatment by which their work is recognized and this, too, provides some insights into their nature.

Since (Bach) had the choice of his own texts for the cantatas we may properly infer that those religious ideas which recur incessantly in his cantatas (especially where no obvious relation to the Gospel for the Day can be seen) represent the religious thoughts which he himself especially endorsed.¹⁷

Bach used several texts by Erdmann Neumeister (1671-1756), the Hamburg orthodox minister who was a stated foe of Pietism. Yet his texts display a deep spirit of devotionism since they were originally intended for his own personal meditations. He himself tells how they came about:

having properly performed by official duties on Sundays in the church, I attempted to transform the most significant thoughts that were treated in the sermon into poetic language for my private devotional use...Thus these cantatas came to birth.¹⁸

The sermons to which these works are related followed the sequential preaching pattern of the lectionary and to this extent participated in the organized liturgy of the Church. Thus they were ideally suited, from this point of view, for church use and supplied materials for musical compositions that then fulfilled a liturgical function themselves as church cantatas. Neumeister's works exemplified pious, subjective expression of intense and personal feeling tones in response to the religious subject matter addressed by them.

¹⁷Robert Stevenson, *Patterns of Protestant Church Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1953), p. 52.

¹⁸Schrade, p. 60.

Franck, the author of many of Bach's Weimar cantata texts was influenced by Neumeister's innovations and textual reforms. He also wrote verse which conveyed the same devotional feeling tones as those of Neumeister. Franck, who first published in the year of Bach's birth, was the author of poetry which also showed the influence of Hofmannswaldau, Rist and Flemming. His work is didactic and emphasizes the atonement function of Christ according to terms related to monetary considerations such as ransom, debt payments, etc. (a typical Baroque characteristic), an emphasis which is modified by its religious piety, however.

Bach built on the cantata reform of Neumeister, expanding the traditional forms, using the innovations which were entering Germany from Italy and employing many of Franck's verses.

These (Weimar) works stand apart from the cantatas of all (other of Bach's) periods by virtue of their strongly mystical and subjective tone that prevails in both words and music. Struggling for his personal style Bach went through a phase of creative subjectivity in Weimar which manifested itself outwardly in the virtuoso attitude of his organ music; turned inwardly it took the form of introspective mysticism and self-centered devotion. These traits have often been explained as symptoms of pietistic influence on Bach's religiosity. Indeed the language of...Franck...makes use of pietistic phraseology, but it must be remembered that the cantata as such, being figural music, was diametrically opposed to the tenets of Pietism. It is true that the religious and artistic subjectivity of Bach resembles externally the devotional fervor of Pietism, but they₁₉ could hardly be more different in origin and purpose.

¹⁹Manfred Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era, from Monteverdi to Bach* (New York: Norton, 1947), p. 279.

It was for the service of the Church, within the pattern and usage of the liturgy which belonged to the tradition of orthodoxy, that these cantatas and also the chorale preludes were composed.

At Weimar Bach produced many of his greatest organ works. Thirty-nine of these major compositions were from this period in his life, representing almost three times the production for the organ of his years after Weimar. Here Bach studied the music of the Italian composers: Vivaldi (d. 1743), Corelli (1653-1713), Frescobaldi (1583-1644), Legrenzi (1625-1690), and Albinoni (1674-1745). His compositional style was much influenced by the Italian School. He used it to overcome the limitations of the German forms because of its more expansive style. His works composed *alla maniera Italiana* and his performing them earned for Bach a wide-spread recognition for his virtuosity in both arts. Yet, it also posed a conflict for him in that he was tempted to go in either of two directions: virtuosity and fame, on the one hand; or dedication to the reform of church music on the other. The fact that he chose the latter is another evidence of Bach's tie to the traditional Lutheran church of his time.

The opportunity to serve the church more directly came to Bach in 1714. While still court organist at Weimar, he had added to his duties those of *Konzertmeister*. This involved the periodic composition of cantatas for the

chapel of the Duke. The aging *Kapellmeister*, Johann Samuel Drese (1644-1716), was not up to this task physically, nor did he have the inspired gifts of the new *Konzertmeister*. It was at this point that Bach and Franck, his most poetic librettist, were drawn into collaboration. Having written about five cantatas before 1714, he now proceeded to compose twenty new ones for the service at Weimar.

The *Kapellmeister*, Drese, died in 1716. Since Bach was actually functioning in this capacity already it would have seemed likely that he would have been the successor. However, Bach was passed over in favor of another candidate. The Duke, failing to attract the services of Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767), chose the decedent's son, Johann Wilhelm Drese. Bach's disappointment over this slight was great. His opportunity to give himself fully to his intended church music reform was denied him. Consequently he seemed to lose interest in what formerly had spurred him on at Weimar. In that same year the young Duke of Weimar, the nephew of Bach's patron, married the sister of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. Being on friendly terms with both members of the newly-wedded pair, Bach made his availability for a new position known to the Prince. As a result, Bach received an invitation to Köthen on August 1, 1717. But the irate elder Weimar Duke refused to release Bach and he was placed under house arrest from November 6 until

December 2 because of his obstinacy for seeking to leave Weimar. Upon his release he left.

INTERLUDE - KÖTHEN: 1717

While Prince Leopold was a most enthusiastic devotee of music, Köthen represented a situation quite different from Weimar. As early as 1596 the Köthen court had ascribed to the Calvinistic branch of the Reformation, although Leopold's mother herself was a Lutheran and continued in that observance. In this Reformed milieu there was no expectation of the new *Kapellmeister* to produce a rich church music, since that tradition expressed itself in a rather limited fashion as far as music was concerned. With minimal church duties Bach gave himself more to those of court musician to a patron who was intensely interested in instrumental music. Setting aside his intention to undertake a systematic reorganization of church music, Bach now involved himself with his own enthusiasm for experimenting with and expanding his great genius for composition.

The advantages of being in Köthen, a Reformed court, rather than in Weimar serving the staunch orthodox Lutheran Duke there, seemed to be in Bach's mind, several. Bach is known to have been interested in and impressed by titles. They secured for him certain privileges and advantages in the carrying out of his duties as they gave him a freer hand in accordance with their place in the hierarchy of

such functionaries. What was not accorded him at Weimar, namely, the post of *Kapellmeister*, was the title and position he came to Köthen to assume. Furthermore, the stipend he was to receive in the latter situation was an improvement over that provided for him in the former. Bach might also have felt that in spite of his avowed aim declared at Mühlhausen, his reputation would be better furthered by composing and performing the works of virtuosity of which he was so capable on both counts. As already mentioned, undoubtedly he was annoyed and disappointed by not being Drese's successor at Weimar, and he might have felt that *Kapellmeister* in a Reformed court was to be desired over *Konzertmeister* in the orthodox court of a patron who did not fully appreciate his abilities and intentions.

Except for the tragic death of his wife, Maria Barbara, in 1720 while Bach was on a journey with the Prince, the years at Köthen represented what appeared to be the happiest of his life.

...his life in the employ of the young prince Leopold was peaceful. For the first time in his professional career, there were no frictions or struggles over his ideal in art and the role of art in his spiritual world. In Arnstadt Bach had been criticized for his strange manner of preludizing the chorales and for his lack of interest in a recalcitrant choir. In Mühlhausen his instrumental music was barred from performance. In Weimar he was forced to work with the uninspiring compositions of a mediocre director of music (Drese). Later, in Leipzig, he was to combat new animosities and threats to the sanctity of his art and its function in public worship. But the six years in Köthen may be

regarded as a period of further preparation for his life's task, the complete creation of a reorganized church music.²⁰

In Köthen Bach was his own man, involved in his first love, composing, and then having the advantage to be able to perform his own works and not be required to compromise his standards by involvement with the inferior craftsmanship of others. When he chose to use others' creations, the choice as to whose and which ones was his. Furthermore, he was in the employ of an adulating patron. His happiness, then, was more of an aesthetic one than vocational one with respect to what he had stated at Mühlhausen. But for these years that consideration must have sufficed, for he later referred to them in such a way as to indicate his desiring to finish out his life in Köthen. This remark was made in a letter dated, Leipzig, October 28, 1730. He was seeking a post at the court in Dresden and wrote to his early school mate from Lüneburg days, Georg Erdmann, importuning his intercession on his behalf. Referring to his time at Köthen, Bach writes, "there I had a gracious Prince, who both loved and knew music, and in his service I intended to spend the rest of my life."²¹

In Köthen Bach took a "vacation" from his avowed aim, although the citation above might be read to indicate

²⁰Chiapusso, pp. 142-3.

²¹Hans T. David, *The Bach Reader* (New York: Norton, 1945), p. 125.

that he had given it up as far as the Lutheran church was concerned. There were really not the opportunities there to bring about such a reform, even apart from theological considerations. The organ was insignificant, the worship services deliberately sparse, the congregation small and there was no corps of church musicians to call upon, all conditions of which were characteristic of the church which stressed music to a much lesser degree than the one of Luther. However, Bach must not have put his Mühlhausen aim entirely out of his mind, for in 1720, after the death of his wife, he traveled to Hamburg to offer his services at the *Jakobskirche* where Erdmann Neumeister, the cantata writer,²² was the preacher. Neumeister favored Bach over the other applicants, but the parish councilors chose Johann Joachim Heitmann, instead. Since that candidate was so obviously inferior in stature to Bach, Neumeister publicly in a sermon castigated the councilors for their decision.

In the following year Bach married Anna Magdelene Wülken, an accomplished singer and accompanist. In later years she was also most useful to Bach as an accurate manuscript writer whose work is still admired today as clear and aesthetically attractive. A week after Bach's remarriage, Prince Leopold married the princess of Berenburg who soon complained that her new husband's love for music inter-

²²See page 87.

ferred with the time he spent with her. The Prince no longer now involved himself as extensively as formerly with music and his friend-in-music, his *Kapellmeister* Bach. This change of relationship became a factor in Bach's eventual decision to leave Köthen. That situation is also detailed in Bach's letter to his friend, Erdmann:

It must happen, however, that the said *Serenissimus* (Prince Leopold) should marry a Princess of Berenburg, and that then the impression should arise that the musical interests of the said Prince had become somewhat lukewarm, especially as the new Princess seemed to be unmusical; and it pleased God that I should be called hither (to Leipzig) to be *Director Musices* and Cantor at Thomas-Schule.²³

During his six years in Köthen Bach had added greatly to his growing store of original compositions. He continued the development of his use of the Italian style, occupying himself with composing keyboard music: solo sonatas, suites, concerti, and other forms of chamber music. His keyboard works reflect the gallante life and cultivated taste of the Köthen court. Here he received the highest and most satisfying recognition of his whole career. His growing reputation earned him many invitations to test several new great organs and be consulted about new designs and renovations of existing instruments.

However, Bach's ties with orthodox Lutheranism still remained strong. He insisted that his children be

²³David, p. 125.

enrolled in the Lutheran school in Köthen in spite of the fact that it was educationally inferior to and had fewer advantages than the Reformed school. While employed and living in a Calvinistic atmosphere he read extensively in the seven-volume 1539 edition of Luther's collected works which were in his library. He also studied the harsh critique written by the Leipzig professor, August Pfeiffer, entitled, *Anticalvinismus*. Reference will be made later to Bach's library²⁴ which at the time of his death contained many basic Lutheran theological works and certain polemical writings aimed against Pietism and the Reformed tradition. Hamel maintains that the preponderance of the Lutheran works were added to the library during the Köthen years.²⁵ Furthermore, most of Bach's friends and associates in this period of his life were orthodox Lutherans. It is also maintained that Bach, in making his decision to move on to Leipzig was motivated by the desire to provide a good university education for his sons. Being in Leipzig would ensure them this and would also do so within the tradition of orthodox Lutheranism of which Leipzig at the time was a noted stronghold.

Bach himself, again in the Erdmann letter, describes how the leaving of Köthen for Leipzig came about: Having

²⁴See pages 114ff.

²⁵Fred Hamel, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), p. 111.

been called, among other candidates, to apply for the Leipzig position, he continues,

though at first, indeed, it did not seem at all proper to me to change my position of Capellmeister for that of Cantor. Wherefore, when, I postponed my decision for a quarter of a year; but this post was described to me in such favorable terms that finally (particularly since my sons seemed inclined toward (university) studies) I cast my lot, in the name of the Lord, and made the journey to Leipzig, took my examination, and then made the change of position.²⁶

In making this change, Bach, weighing the alternatives open to him with reference to the use he would make of his continued life in music, chose again for the Church and the Mühlhausen Declaration regarding the direction of his vocation and its emphasis.

LEIPZIG: 1723

Back to the Church

On June 5, 1722, Johann Kuhnau (1667-1722), Cantor at the *Thomasschule* in Leipzig for over twenty years, died. The following month the town council sought a successor from among six applicants. The choice, finally, was Georg Philipp Telemann who had just recently taken up his duties at the Hamburg opera in the previous year. Because of his having just begun his work at Hamburg and also because he hesitated to undertake the responsibility of teaching Latin

²⁶David, p. 125.

to the students at the school in Leipzig, Telemann declined the offer. Christoph Graupner (1683-1760) was the second choice, but his patron, the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt, refused to let him go. Sometime around December Bach applied for the position and was invited in February 1723 to conduct one of his cantatas in Leipzig. His *St. John Passion* was performed on Good Friday. On the fifth of May he accepted the post in which he was installed on May 31.

Bach thus re-entered the service of the Church after six years' absence from direct involvement with Lutheranism vocationally and some fifteen years after his M"hlhausen statement. He was now situated in one of the main traditional bastions of orthodox Lutheranism, closely associated with Wittenberg, assigned to the duty of providing music for the Church. The Leipzig Council had wanted an accomplished organist as successor to Kuhnau. In the choice of Bach, though the third, they fulfilled their desires. However, their statement was that he was selected "since the best man could not be obtained, (and) mediocre ones would have to be accepted."²⁷ In spite of not having his former prestigious title Bach was well compensated for his new duties. He was to spend the rest of his life here

²⁷Basil Smallman, *The Background of Passion Music* (London: S C M Press, 1957), p. 11.

in a town of already considerable intellectual, cultural and religious reputation and one rapidly becoming one of the main centers of culture in the eighteenth century in Germany. Both the university and the new opera house provided the city with this atmosphere.

Director Musices

Bach's position as *Director Musices* and cantor at the *Thomasschule* in Leipzig was by municipal appointment, according to the long-standing tradition of the Reformation which extended into this period.

Since the Reformation German music has drawn all its substance from the city. Musical composition had to be furnished for all civic and religious events in the town. Training in music was carried on by the school as well as by the church, and the same persons often served in both places. In consequence of this unifying process, exemplified in the "Kantorei," a musical institution most prominent during the age of the Reformation, the repertory of musical works in any one city was to an astonishing degree of one kind only - all alike. But this organization limited the effectiveness and activity of the musician to the single city in which he lived...elaborate rules forbade any activity outside the town...This extreme limitation is significant for the whole of German baroque music. We must keep this always in mind if we are to understand the calamities that befell the greatest of the German musicians during this period, not as personal misfortunes that call for sympathy, but as their inevitable historical destiny. Heinrich Schütz suffered severely from such limitations and narrow circumstances. Händel cast them off; he left all the institutions of the city and turned once and for all to the opera which granted wider scope.

Bach, however, grew up and remained in the small-town atmosphere and narrowness.²⁸

²⁸Schrade, pp. 15-7.

As *Director Musices* for the town of Leipzig Bach was expected to compose and select the music for the town's four churches; he was to prepare the musicians for their functions; compose cantatas for civic festivals and the church high holy days; direct the chorus at weddings, funerals and at other ceremonies; and to follow the funeral processions with the children of his school. Of the church services the more elaborate ones were conducted in the *Thomaskirche*, the next less intricate being held in the *Nikolaikirche*. The smaller *Peterskirche* and *Johanneskirche* had the least embellished services of all. Bach's musical activities are thus most associated with the first two churches named, between which he alternated Sundays, providing the cantatas, among the other music. These works were included in the *Hauptgottesdienst* which

...began at seven in the morning and lasted until about noon. In the course of it a cantata was performed by the choir, organ and orchestra. At the other services the music was simple and sung to organ accompaniment. At the afternoon service (Vespers) on three high festivals, however, it was customary to render a Latin *Magnificat* with full orchestra accompaniment, and, on Good Friday, Passion music was performed in similar conditions.²⁹

When Bach arrived at Leipzig Johann Walther's (1496-1570) traditional plainsong Passion was still in use. The congregation sang the hymns without organ accompaniment, al-

²⁹ Terry, p. 10.

though the choral singing received the benefit of this instrument. The choir's rendition of the motets was accompanied by cornets and trombones. General interest in church music had already begun to lessen. Bach's response to this situation was the prodigious out-pouring of his great creative genius. He provided, in time, harmonizations - running into the hundreds - of currently used chorale melodies. They were originally written for larger choral works (cantatas, Passions, oratorios) and were also available for choir presentation in the worship service. It is conceivable that the congregation might have sung the melodies in unison along with the choir in such settings as those in which the melodic line did not differ from the version with which the congregation was familiar. These were later collected and published in various editions by Bach's son, Carl Philipp Emanuel (1714-1788) and his pupil, Johann Friedrich Agricola (1720-1774). In Leipzig Bach also composed the many cantatas which make up the five yearly cycles that his efforts brought forth. That town claimed more than half of Bach's productive years and was the scene of tremendous musical creativity on his part.

Kantor

The office of cantor at the *Thomasschule* required the teaching of Latin grammar and syntax to those enrolled in the lower school. It was also the cantor's duty to

teach "piety" and "etiquette," using the text, *Colloquia cordi*. Bach had much to put up with in regard to student discipline, manners, lack of musical ability and paucity of numbers for his musical groups. These concerns, in addition to the usual musical ones, drew Bach into conflict with his colleagues and superiors. Over all, the appointment at Leipzig provided many unhappy, conflicting, disappointing and even harassing aspects which detracted from the Cantor's felicity and left him wishing for better, more halcyon days such as he had experienced in Köthen. However, he did make reference, in the letter to Erdmann, to his pleasure over the musical abilities of and opportunities with the members of his family.

Criticism of Bach's Style

Bach's style of composition became the subject of criticism during his time in Leipzig. Recalling that this was the period of the rising influence of the Italian style of composition, the "operatic style" followed by many German composers of the time, one sees the criticism of Bach as a part of the rejection by some of this style, or at least of its use in the Church. Bach's predecessor, Kuhnau had stuck to the older, traditional style of music, but his death opened the way for a change in favor of the newer style. However, the town council represented the more conservative view associated with Kuhnau's work. One of

its members, the *Dominus consul*, Dr. Steger, who had concurred in Bach's selection, nevertheless stated that he wished Bach "would make compositions that were not theatrical."³⁰ Another hope expressed was that "in order to preserve good order in the churches," the new cantor was expected "so to arrange the music that it shall not last too long, and shall be of such a nature as not to make an operatic impression, but rather to incite the listeners to devotion."³¹

However, Bach did what he had to do as an artist in conformity to his inner spirit and what he was wont to do according to his persistent, if not stubborn, nature. He had set his mind to a reformation of church music to recapture the old Lutheran tradition and restore the liturgy, but the vehicle that expressed his inner creative urgings was that of the rich and lavish style associated with his great compositions, influenced as they were by his study of the Italian style. And for this he was criticized by his detractors. In 1732 Christian Gerber published the following account in his *History of Church Ceremonies in Saxony*:

Fifty and more years ago it was the custom for the organ to remain silent in church on Palm Sunday, and on that day, because it was the beginning of Holy Week, there was no music. But gradually the Passion story, which had formerly been sung in simple plain chant, humbly and reverently, began to be sung with many dif-

³¹Ibid., p. 18.

ferent kinds of instruments in the most elaborate fashion, occasionally mixing in a setting of a Passion Chorale which the whole congregation joined in singing, and then the mass of instruments fell to again. When in a large town this Passion music was done for the first time, with 12 violins (Strings), many oboes, bassoons, and other instruments, many people were astonished and did not know what to make of it. In the pew of a noble family in church, many Ministers and Noble Ladies were present, who sang the first Passion Chorale out of the books with great devotion. But when this theatrical music began, all these people were thrown into the greatest bewilderment, looked at each other, and said, 'What will come of this?' An old widow of the nobility said: 'God save us, my children! It's just as if one were at an Opera Comedy.' But everyone was genuinely displeased by it and voiced just complaints against it. There are, it is true, some people who take pleasure in such idle things, especially if they are of sanguine temperament and inclined to sensual pleasure. Such persons defend large-scale church compositions as best they may, and hold others to be crotchety and of melancholy temperament - as if they alone possessed the wisdom of Solomon, and others had no understanding.³²

Since this assessment was published three years after the first performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and because of its reference to the earlier custom regarding the use of the Passions in the service of the church, it is quite possible that it is a report on the performance of Bach's work. As such it illustrates the controversy surrounding the most appropriate style of music for devotion at the time the new style was being introduced and as tastes came into conflict. Yet Bach continued in his post another eighteen years until his death in 1750.

³²David, pp. 229-30.

Five years after Gerber's diatribe Johann Adolph Scheibe (1708-1776) published the following statement in his *Des kritischen Musikus sechstes stück* on May 4, 1737. He begins without names, but depicts Bach beyond a doubt, by praising him as a "most eminent musician" and "wonderful artist on the clavichord and the organ." But then he complains that Bach composes what is impossible for anyone to perform and that which fails to convey a truly musical experience.

This great man would be the admiration of all nations if he had more amenity, and his works were not made unnatural by their turgid and confused character, and their beauty obscured by too much art. As he judges by his own fingers, his pieces are extremely hard to play; he expects the singers and the instrumentalists to do with their throats and their instruments what he can play on the clavier. This, however, is impossible. All graces, all little embellishments, and everything that one understands by style in playing, he writes out in the exact notes, which not only deprives his pieces of the beauty of harmony, but makes the melody absolutely indistinct. All the parts work together and with the same difficulty, so that we cannot distinguish any leading voice. In short he is in music what formerly Herr von Lohenstein was in poetry.³³ Turgidity has led them both from the natural to the artificial, and from the lofty to the obscure, and in each of them one wonders at the painful labor of it all, that nevertheless comes to nothing, since it is at variance with reason.³⁴

These two rather lengthy descriptions of Bach's art by his contemporaries indicate the stylistic preferences of their authors; yet they also may indicate the primitive

³³Kaspar von Lohenstein (1635-1683), poet and author of tragedies.

³⁴André Pirro, *J. S. Bach* (New York: Bonanza Press, 1957), p. 56.

state in the development of musical performance. It is well-known that Bach suffered because of a lack of good players. Furthermore, the mechanics of instrumental design has changed so that in these days more effective playing with greater proficiency leads to better music on the part of the talented and well-trained musician. The heavy action of the tracker organ has been replaced with electro-magnetic controls requiring less physical force for playing, leaving greater opportunity for digital facility. It is a wonder, among the many relating to Bach, that he could perform on the organs of his day with such tremendous facility as he is described as having done, considering the ponderousness of the action of those instruments. Moreover, the violin has undergone design improvements since Bach's time. For one thing, the bow is now convex and the tension of the hair is adjusted mechanically rather than manually by thumb pressure as in former days. The bridge is higher and more arched as is also the fingerboard, alleviating the difficulties caused by flatter accessories. The neck also is longer, allowing for better articulation and intonation. Better tones are produced these days by metal and wire-wound gut strings, replacing all-gut strings used in Bach's time. These physical improvements could conceivably account for performances today which overcome the criticisms of his contemporaries that Bach's music was too dif-

ficult to play, though it still requires a high degree of proficiency and well-advanced technique. The articulation and distinctness of the melodic line are enhanced by today's use of modern strings which afford a more penetrating timbre to contrast to the other orchestral instruments.

Conflict

Bach had to contend not only with his detractors musically, but also with those who provided stumbling blocks in the way of his administrative duties. The most famous of his controversies is the one involving Ernesti, his rector. The roots of it probably include professional jealousy, stubborn insistence upon prerogatives claimed by both, plus some very real differences regarding the function of music in worship and even also basic principles of biblical interpretation.

Johann August Ernesti (1707-1781), the *Thomasschule* sub-rector, became rector in 1734, replacing Bach's friend, Gesner, who had moved on to the newly-founded University of Göttingen. In 1736 an altercation took place between Bach and the rector. It had to do with the latter's dismissing and publicly criticizing the head prefect at the school, Gottlieb Theodor Krause. Bach saw this as an interference with his internal administration since it was the cantor who was to select his own General Prefect. Furthermore, Ernesti's choice was musically incapable of fulfilling

his duties. Charges and counter-charges passed between the two. The verbal battle and personal pique lasted over two years during which both appealed to the town council for support. Bach finally importuned Dresden with the result that the feud between the two officials at the *Thomasschule* finally came to an end with the intercession of August III in Bach's favor on Easter 1738.

The Ernesti conflict went deeper than the issue involving Krause. This was just the provocation, yet a real issue. Ernesti reflected the spirit of the new rationalism of the Enlightenment which was spreading over Europe at this time. It was not without its champions in Leipzig. Regarding music, Ernesti had little interest, was somewhat antagonistic to it and certainly had little, if any, appreciation for elaborate and embellished music. A reason given for his objections was that in that kind of music he "found...something that impaired scientific studies."³⁵ He also opposed the large place that music had had in the school's curriculum. Under his guidance as a representative of "enlightened rationalism," "the old principle of the school, 'to guide the students through the euphony of music to the contemplation of the divine,' was discarded."³⁶

³⁵*Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Leipzig: Düncker & Humblot, 1877), VI, 236.

³⁶Schrade, p. 114.

Under these conditions of opposing viewpoints almost anything would have been sufficient cause to bring the opinions and approaches of these two men into open conflict.

Limited Appreciation

In his own time Bach was ranked as a great performer on the keyboard and particularly adept at the art of improvisation. However, his church music was hardly known beyond the circles of the parishes he served. His associations with the nobility, apart from his employment by royal patrons, stem from invitations he received to perform to the amazement of the listeners and from his dedications of compositions to their number. In addition to the positions he held and the titles conferred upon Bach that have already been mentioned, he was named Honorary *Kapellmeister* by the Duke of Weissenfels in 1723 and was received, at another time, with the greatest of admiration by the Crown Prince of Hesse. Perhaps the highest honor that came to him was his invitation to Potsdam and Berlin to visit Frederick the Great, King of Prussia. The King delighted in Bach's improvisations and *ex-tempore* playing of a six-part fugue on a theme submitted by His Majesty himself. He was invited to try several new instruments, forte pianos constructed by Silbermann, and to play on all the organs in Potsdam and several in Berlin. Bach's composition, *The Musical Offering*, is dedicated to Frederick the Great,

whose theme Bach used in this work.

In spite of all this recognition Bach was not highly regarded as a composer during his own lifetime. In his aim to regulate church music he had depended on the older traditions of form and content as well as function. To the new disciples of the Enlightenment he was the "Old Wig of Leipzig," an anachronism, even though he was esteemed as a performer.

Bach died on July 31, 1750 experiencing a painful eye disease. He was still composing on his death bed, dictating to his pupil and son-in-law, Johann Christoph Altnikol (d. 1759). The text of the composition was, *Vor deinen Thron tret' ich hiemit!*

Conclusion: Bach's Relationships to Lutheran Orthodoxy and Pietism.

The evidences of Bach's adherence to the traditional Lutheran heritage in contrast to the Pietist movement of his day are rather convincing. His background and biographical indications of this have already been touched upon. In this conclusion further reference is being made to the "Lutheran" character of his compositions and the contents of his library as additional support for identifying his loyalty to his church.

Wolfgang Trillhaas asserts that Bach rescued the Lutheran chorale from neglect and relative disuse within

the church of his time. The traditional Lutheran chorales were the foundation of both the vocal and instrumental compositions of Bach. In this he was unique among his contemporaries such as Händel, Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), Reinhard Keiser (1674-1739) and Telemann. Occasionally they would treat a chorale in their works, but for the most part for them the chorale tunes were ancient melodies of a former era unsuitable for conveying the elegance and drama of the new and theatrical music.

But in the Passions of Bach and the later church cantatas and organ works, Bach repeatedly affirms the importance of the chorales as a vital source of religious and musical inspiration and thereby retains a valuable link with the true Lutheran tradition.³⁷

This great resource of the Lutheran church is the *cantus firmus* of much of Bach's musical output. Bach, using this chorale literature and selecting biblical texts from the Church's lectionary in fulfillment of the liturgical year's sequence of Sundays, addressed himself to the basic themes of the Church: the sin of man, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the significance of the Church and sacraments and the hope of eternal life. He accepts the Scriptures as the final authority for faith, and he makes the Person of Christ central in his exposition of the Christian faith in accordance with its cardinal position in historic Lutheranism. Strict adherence to the biblical message and emphasis

³⁷ Srollman, p. 87.

of a heart-felt, personally-experienced faith indicate Bach's affinity to the spirit of Luther.

The Lutheran chorale supplied Bach with both the design and the details of his larger works. Providing ingenious and brilliant embellishment for the *cantus firmus* of the chorale, he contributed some of the most magnificent organ literature of all time to the ages. Schweitzer lists some sixty-four chorale preludes and fantasies written by Bach, taking a different chorale tune from the tradition and naming each prelude after the title of the chorale which forms its foundation. We need only to recall a few of these to appreciate the use Bach made of this tremendous treasure store: *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (Luther's adaptation of an anonymous tune), *Nun danket Alle Gott* (Crüger), *Ein' feste Burg* (Luther), *Herzlich tut mich verlangen* (Hassler), *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* (Crüger), *Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her* (Luther?), *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* (Nicolai), *O Lamm Gottes* (anonymous), and on and on.

The *Preface* of Albert Schweitzer's two-volume work on Bach contains a statement by Widor, the great French organist-composer, and illuminates the manner in which Bach used the chorales as the basis of many of his contemporaries:

One day in 1899, when we (Widor and Schweitzer) were going through the chorale preludes I confessed to him that a good deal in these compositions were enigmatic to me. 'Bach's musical logic in the preludes and fugues,' I said, 'is quite simple and clear; but it becomes cloudy as soon as he takes up a chorale melody ...The more I study them the less I understand them.'

'Naturally', said my pupil, 'many things in the chorales must seem obscure to you, for the reason that they are only explicable by the texts pertaining to them.'

...In a flash it became clear to me that the cantor of St. Thomas's was much more than an incomparable contrapuntist...and that his work exhibits an unparalleled desire and capacity for expressing poetic ideas and for bringing word and tone into unity.³⁸

The didactic function of the chorale preludes is clear to those who are steeped in the tradition of their texts. Bach was both teaching and inciting to devotion those of his contemporary worshipers who shared with him the orthodox Lutheran heritage. He sought to recover and revive it for them as he brought these and other artistic creations based on the chorales into the liturgy of the Church of his time.

For the Passions Bach restored the actual text of the Gospel, rejecting the insipid poetic paraphrases found in many contemporary librettos, some of which were set to music by the well-known composers of the time. In this restoration Bach exhibited his Lutheran bias for the primacy of the Word. The same orthodox perspective is shown by Bach's bringing the chorale back into the Passion. In all his work he blends his consummate genius with his fully appropriated Lutheran tradition.

...coupled with his skill and artistry one soon discovers a Lutheran religiosity and theological acumen

³⁸ Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), I, vi-viii.

(in Bach) which are astonishing and which manifest themselves particularly in his music based on texts from the Bible, of Lutheran chorales and of Christian liturgy.³⁹

Bach's library has often been referred to as a source of evidence as to his theological persuasion. At best such an approach is inferential and tentative. However, one might assume that in a day when books, and certainly sets of many volumes, were much more expensive than in our day, they were neither purchased with little thought given to selection, nor used for occasional gift presentations. With that in mind, we might reason that for Bach to make a particular title a part of his library he approached his choice as one would an investment. What we find are the tools of his trade on his shelves as inventoried at the time of his death. The Bach "library" included two complete sets of Luther's works. Polemical literature is found which supports and defends Lutheran orthodoxy against Pietism. There are the classical works of Chemnitz, Johann Gerhard, Calovius and August Pfeiffer.

Some of the devotional texts included among the collection of books that served Bach in his life and work are the orthodox Lutheran pious texts such as Arndt's *Wahres Christentum*, Gerhard's *Schola Pietatis* (5 vols.), and

³⁹W. E. Buszin, "Johann Sebastian Bach," in *Lutheran Cyclopedia* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1954), p. 82.

Tauler's sermons. Titles representing Pietist writers were also among these: works by Rambach, Francke, and even Spener; though the latter's was not *Pia Desideria* which sets forth his position, but rather his *Zeal against Popery*, which is a title Luther might well have adopted. Speculating once again on the significance of this list, one might say that these books served Bach in two ways - to provide devotional reading and poetic ideas to translate into music, and also to familiarize himself with the views of those who figured so prominently in the theological controversy that his age witnessed, but which Bach himself rejected. However, an unavoidable conclusion concerning Bach which must be drawn after a study of his life and music is that Bach had a deep sensitive spirit and an aspect to his nature which was nothing less than pious.

Bach's piety shines through his musical creations. He believed himself to be called of God to execute his tasks and dedicated the products of his abilities and sensitivities to the Almighty, even the secular ones. In the second chapter of his *Gründlichen Unterrichts des General-Basses*, he writes, "as with all music, so also the beginning and end significance of the general bass is no different: that it should be dedicated to the praise of God and the restoration of the spirit (heart)." "Where this is not taken into serious consideration, the result is no

genuine music, but rather a devilish monotony and grinding away."⁴⁰

Kantzenbach calls the piety of Bach orthodox Lutheran. He points out that musically Hassler, Vulpus, Eccard and Melchior Franck belong to the same textual (theological) tradition as that of Arndt, Nicolai and Herberger. All these he places within the Lutheran heritage of piety (*Frömmigkeit*). Bach belongs to that tradition, he maintains, having as its center the crucified and risen Lord. Furthermore he claims that Bach could not have accomplished so lofty a fulfillment of his goal except for his own personal religious experience. This he brought, together with his artistic genius, to bear upon the revelations of Scripture, Reformation theology, Lutheran orthodoxy and Protestant Baroque mysticism.⁴¹

Finally, it must be said, Bach could not have been a Pietist: he was too involved in the institutional Church with its liturgical tradition of the Reformation to which he gave his life. His music served the didactic promulgation of dogma. He could not countenance separatist tendencies or actions. Bach was no ascetic; he had a robust love for the world. The artistic style he adopted and developed

⁴⁰Oskar Söhngen, *Theologie der Musik* (Kassel: Stauda, 1967), p. 272.

⁴¹Kantzenbach, p. 93.

was anathema to the Pietists. However, by providing musical expression for human affections related to the personal acceptance and appropriation of God's atoning Gift, through sensitive, devotional - even sublime and ethereal - composing, Bach serves the cause of subjective religious expression. Yet, Werner Richter is said to have stated that Dürer and Bach have caught the spirit of Luther better than any of his biographers.

CHAPTER 6

BACH AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER

INTERPRETATION AND DOGMA

Bach has been called "the most prolific biblical interpreter of the first half of the eighteenth century."¹ This may sound like a strange assessment applied to a musician living in a time when biblical scholarship was going through all sorts of significant development as historical and philological research abounded during this age of awakened rationalism at the beginning of the Enlightenment. But, as a matter of fact, the composer of five yearly cantata cycles, hundreds of chorale preludes and harmonizations, several motets, oratorios and Passions - one of the most prodigious composers of his time - used the Bible and its derivative literature as the almost exclusive source of his textual material for his sacred compositions. "All Bach's work is ultimately religious and it is also Biblical in the sense that its point of view is, by and large, that of the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures," states Scheide.²

It was the function of the composer of the Lutheran church of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to pro-

¹Paul S. Minear, "Matthew, Evangelist, and Johann, Composer," *Theology Today* XXX (1973), 243.

²William H. Scheide, *Johann Sebastian Bach as Biblical Interpreter* (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1952), p. 10.

vide the musical literature used in conjunction with worship. This was intended to expand and illuminate Scriptural meanings in the same fashion as the sermon functioned exegetically and expositorily. This music was actually a sermon supplement. Day reminds us that Kuhnau, Bach's predecessor at Leipzig,

emphasized that the composer should not only be able 'to move the affections and to express all such things skillfully,' but also 'to understand the right sense and scope of the text all the time,' as well as being well versed in scriptural exegesis.³

As these composers gave themselves to the texts of the Bible their work revealed certain exegetical characteristics and principles.

Bach's treatment of the Bible sought to express in the feeling tones of his music the inner meanings of the concepts as they related to the individual believer. His was not an exegesis of the new type the rationalists were introducing. They came to the Word in the same terms as the historical and grammatical analysis of any other ancient text. Bach's concern for the affective content expressed with a spiritual intensity is linked by Schrade with a Pietist emphasis. Although Bach, as previously stated,

³James Day, *The Literary Background to Bach's Cantatas* (New York: Dover, 1966), p. 93. Day is here quoting Arnold Schmitz, *Das Bildlichkeit der wortgebundenen Musik Johann Sebastian Bachs* (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1949), footnote to p. 25.

never outwardly gave any evidence of an alignment with Pietism, and, on the contrary, even gave every indication of his loyalty to the structures of orthodox Lutheranism, still he does reveal a pious intensity in his exposition of biblical texts which appears to be somewhat akin to the Pietists. They, too, were concerned with an inner response by the believer (hearer). They and Bach did not relate to linguistic studies and their findings. Instead, their interest was in the personal relationship to the meaning of the text at hand. In Bach's case he was also fulfilling the dogmatic and didactic function by the manner in which he cast these words in his musical expressions. In that respect he distinguished himself from the Pietists. Bach

believed that intimate and spiritual conversation with God will reveal the truth and pious sense of the word ...The act of interpretating the word depends on the pious intensity of the individual, not at all on the dogmatic sense that men of the past have established and sanctified.⁴

Yet it must be said that Bach was clear on his dogmatics and made a conscious effort through his music to catch their import for the listener. His treatment of the catechetical hymns is an example of this in that he would even undertake such an approach as using them as vehicles for his music. The issue of the most appropriate musical conveyance for the texts he selected for his cantatas

⁴Leo Schrade, *Bach, the Conflict between the Sacred and the Secular* (New York: Merlin Press, 1966), p. 54.

is another indication of the care with which Bach approached his exegetical task and of his understanding of the dogmatic and didactic function of his compositions. His portrayal of the Person of Christ, on the basis of Luther's acceptance of a Pauline substitutionary concept of the Atonement, is a clear declaration on the part of Bach of the place he makes in his work for doctrine. In this he is to be clearly distinguished from the Pietists' approach to both text and music.

BACH'S "PURPOSIVENESS"

Bach does, however, bring the deepest expression of his piety to the text for which he composes his music. The text is musically treated with a kind of devout contemplation in order to reveal its inner meanings. This accounts for what has been called the "purposiveness" of his music, as Scheide describes it.

Bach was not necessarily a more skillful manipulator of melodies than his predecessors. But the tunes he did work with..are impregnated in every note with harmonic direction, they exude an unfailing purposiveness no matter how boundless they may be...One might almost say that in Bach a kind of cosmic purposiveness takes command, subordinating all musical elements to itself.⁵

The Bible is the most purposive of all books, driving forward with all its accounts and messages to the truth of God's purpose of salvation. The exegetical work of Bach,

⁵Scheide, p. 8.

which he wrought through his music, combined the purposiveness of his compositional style with the purposiveness of the biblical message. Catching something of the flavor of this, Mendelssohn's teacher, Karl Friedrich Zeltner (1758-1832), is said to have exclaimed to Goethe: "If you could hear one of Sebastian Bach's motets you would feel yourself at the center of the world."⁶

In this connection Minear speaks of the "sovereign" and "invasive" purposes of God respecting his human creation which are behind the purposive character of the Bible. He goes on to say that this quality inspires the purposiveness of Bach's music as it invades the human mind and spirit. Citing Erich Auerbach's insistence that an adequate exegesis must do full justice to this invasive feature of the Gospel, Minear then concludes that Bach accomplishes just that.⁷

BACH, THE EXEGETE

Bach looks beyond the surface meaning of the text and delves into the implied meanings. Startling thoughts are matched with complexity of musical composition as an

⁶Ibid., p. 12.

⁷Paul S. Minear, "J. S. Bach and J. A. Ernesti: A Case Study in Exegetical and Theological Conflict," in *Our Common History as Christians, Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 138.

extension of his illuminating a text. An example of the broad range of Bach's canvas that reaches beyond the immediate chapter and verse he may be dealing with occurs in the *St. Matthew Passion*. After the recitation of Matthew 27:55-58, in which Joseph of Arimathea requests the body of Jesus, Bach introduces the bass arioso-recitative (No. 74), *Am Abend, da es kühle war*. Here Bach ranges all the way back to Genesis, leaving the first Gospel account, in order to relate Adam's fall, through the redemption from the Flood, to the reconciling peace accomplished by God in the death of his Son. The device that ties them all together is the fact that all these relate to the evening when they took place: Adam's banishment from the Garden, the Dove's return to the ark with the olive branch, and the removal of Jesus' body to the tomb. The accompanying music breathes the relief of cool evening breezes to assuage the torrid terror of the crucifixion spectacle. The agony is over. The fright has subsided. The reconciliation is effected. Peace reigns.

Another means Bach used to expand the meaning of the material that is particularly before the hearer as indicated by the score is to use the tune of a specific chorale set to words that are not traditionally associated with that chorale but fit its meter. Here Bach is trading on the congregation's familiarity with both tune and text, but they are not matched according to traditional usage. In

this way the message of the words usually associated with the tune that is being used impinges upon the mind and spirit, while at the same time a second message is being conveyed by another set of words written into the score. Through this device Bach is "getting double mileage out of the tune and its text."⁸

The narrative recitation is not a mere mechanical recounting of the sequence of Matthew's Passion episode. Rather, by means of the dynamics of the music and note sequences, an intensity of conviction comes through, expressing the narrator's own emotional response to what is taking place. This mode of presentation then engages the listener in what is happening so that he loses his identity as a mere uninvolved viewer and is drawn into a participation of his spirit in the action itself. The unfolding of Peter's denial in the *St. Matthew Passion* provides this experience for anyone who hears it. All of the dramatic build-up with accusations and denials is there, and when the third denial is hurled forth with swearing and cursing the cock crows! An unrelieved pathos accompanies Peter's bitter weeping which is extended into the alto aria, *Erbarme dich, mein Gott* (No. 47).

Beyond the recitative narration, Bach provides in this Passion the commentary upon the text by means of arias,

⁸Day, p. 91.

choruses and chorales. The hearer is not allowed to escape the personal implication of the narrative. He is drawn right into it. These musical selections are applied to the heart of the hearer with a devotional subjectivism that fulfills the purposiveness of both the text and its musical vehicle. The word of Scripture, writes Smend, "obsesses Bach."⁹ Its supplementation by the commentaries carries it to the individual heart. Music and text intertwine sympathetically and functionally in this accomplishment. Schweitzer comments, "the relation of Bach's music to its text is the most intimate that can be imagined,"¹⁰ "his musical phrase being only the verbal phrase recast in tone."¹¹

The text for Bach was given utmost significance as he sought to press out of each word and thought its fullest religious significance. However, it was brought into cooperative interplay with the music, which in turn, fulfilled no inferior rôle to the words.

That Bach regarded music and text as interdependent is surely shown by the care he takes to adapt allusions inherent in the texts he set; and that he did not regard the music as completely subservient to the text

⁹Friedrich Smend, *Luther und Bach* (Berlin: Verlagshaus und Schule GmbH, 1947), p. 15.

¹⁰Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), II, 25.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 26.

can be seen from the fact that he always kept the illustrative elements within bounds and developed the music according to strictly musical laws, never allowing allusion to or illustration of too many words to disrupt either the shape of the musical design or the clarity of emphasis in the arias.¹²

With reference to Bach's ability to create captivating images through music, Schweitzer says, "Bach is not satisfied until he is sure that the hearer actually sees the dust of the whirlwind, the clouds scudding across the sky, the falling leaves, the raging waves."¹³ Through his discovery of his own techniques and the use of other composers' devices Bach is able to bring together the most appropriate and convincing of music to convey both the subtlety of detail and the full import of the message of any chosen text he employs.

Regarding Bach's achievement through his Passions, Burt writes,

The Passions of Bach are essentially sermons in music, and are masterpieces of exegesis. At his best Bach, like every great preacher, tries to give his text an emotional setting that will illuminate its meaning, and thus it becomes for his hearers a means of spiritual elevation. Bach eagerly grasped every opportunity the text offered him to present a definite picture to the mind's eye...Bach's music not only expresses, but, in the fullest sense, illuminates the text.¹⁴

¹²Day, pp. 99-100.

¹³Schweitzer, II, 43.

¹⁴Allen G. Burt, "Fifth Evangelist," *Religion in Life* XIX:3 (Summer 1950), 433.

Word and music are so closely related in Bach's cantatas and Passions for the sake of stirring within the listener basic religious emotions. Such cantata texts as those supplied by Salomo Franck and Erdmann Neumeister were systematically expressed through a music that was capable of effectively conveying the emotional content of the words and their meanings. In Bach's work there is the presupposition that the biblical text is intended to release an intensity of religious response on the part of the reader. So too, the music to which these words are set was to have the same function. The task of the composer-interpreter, then, became more than that of merely providing an accurate musical rendition of a given text, but became instead one of producing within the hearer an appropriate emotional reaction to the religious meaning inherent in the text. And so "the decisive task of the cantatas consists not in narration or dramatic presentation of events, but in an always new relation of this event to the men of the present."¹⁵

Directed toward the individual who experiences these religious emotions, the music nevertheless makes a universal appeal. What the individual member of the

¹⁵ Minear, "J.S. Bach and J. A. Ernesti," pp. 137-8.

audience or congregation takes to heart, all members are confronted with. The chorale has the peculiar function of drawing them together in their experience to unify an aggregate of individuals into a corporate entity in their common relationship to what is taking place before them. Universality also refers to time. What the Leipzig burgher was called upon to respond to, the contemporary listener cannot escape.

Bach had a well-developed sense of the dramatic which he displayed in his cantata and Passion compositions. The conventional elements of tension, excitement, suspense are present in many of his works. This is not to say that they are "theatrical." There is no overbearing element of their being "staged" in them. They are devotional works intended for worship and not theatrical works intended for entertainment or even edification. Worship includes edification, but goes beyond it to the point of dedication through devotion. Bach had no intention whatsoever to produce staged works, yet he used all his sensitivities and musical genius to preserve, enhance and convey the dramatic elements of his librettos and biblical texts in order that they might reach into the hearts of the hearers.

Bach's ability to give a text an appropriate rendition of its dramatic ingredients made for a lively realism in his work. The *St. Matthew Passion* provides a realistic experience of epic and worshipful proportions for the

serious listener. In that sense it is "dramatic" without involving any theatrical trappings or associations. Yet these works of Bach were written for the Church and neither for the theater, opera house, nor even concert hall. Their purpose was to serve the liturgy of the orthodox Lutheran heritage.

Bach took materials from various parts of the Bible as the texts with which to work. The Psalms, prophets, Gospels and epistles all rendered up passages for him with which to create his music and accomplish his exegesis. In the New Testament renditions he was principally concerned with the figure of Jesus Christ. The atoning work of Christ is even introduced into the texts stemming from the Old Testament as he gives expression to his faith in the Savior. Whenever any person of the Trinity is treated it is done so in terms of the bass solo, often with the least amount of accompanying material. Frequently it is in the form of a keyboard or string continuo which furnishes the progressive movement and the contextual foundation for the melodic line.

From the Italians, via the pattern set by Schütz, Bach borrows the device of accompanying strings for the sayings of Jesus. Interpreters have called this the "halo" associated with the appearances of Christ's words in the musical compositions of this period. In the *St. Matthew Passion* this use of string music adds an ethereal quality

in contrast to the other disturbing and even sometimes violent scenes. The portrayal of the central figure of the Faith serves, in Bach, to bridge the gap between the temporal and the eternal. All the appurtenances of the historical world are present and yet these do not exhaust either the meaning or the nature of Christ. He is also related to the eternal, cosmic purposes of God as he is given an ontological status within the realm of God. All this is conveyed in Bach's music. The nuances of his compositions, the development of his melodies, the uses of his shifting tonalities, his harmonies and instrumentation - all conspire to bring about this same union of, and sometimes tension between, the temporal and eternal, just as he portrays the Christ as bridging the gulf between these two realms of experience.

Scheide sees in Bach's treatment of Jesus the most successful of any of the portraiture of the Savior.

...here we come face to face with what must ultimately be considered the central achievement of Bach's art. The impulses which led him to create his portrait of Jesus were those which lay deepest in his spirit. In the last analysis, what Bach offers in his Biblical settings is not a generalized religious exaltation but the delineation and fascination of a particular personality, a personality which he expressed artistically in such a way that it carries the conviction of being the most tremendous of all personalities...It is hard to find a face of Christ, painted or modeled in recent centuries at least, that expresses the power of Bach's conception.¹⁶

¹⁶ Scheide, p. 53.

The following chapter includes the application of some of these exegetical traits present in Bach's music as found in the *St. Matthew Passion*.

CHAPTER 7

THE SAINT MATTHEW PASSION

THE LIBRETTIST: PICANDER

The first performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* was on Good Friday, April 15, 1729, at the *Thomaskirche* in Leipzig. The narrative text is the verbatim of Matthew, chapters twenty-six and seven. It is interspersed with eight chorales that occur fifteen times throughout the work, for which Bach selected the hymn stanzas. The texts of the recitative ariosos, arias, duets and choruses were written by his Leipzig librettist, Christian Friedrich Henrici (1700-1764), whose pseudonym was Picander. For the most part they were taken from his *Ernstscherzhafte und satyrische Gedichte* published at Easter 1729. Such a title hardly seems to indicate a source from which a treatment of the passion of Christ could come, yet such mixtures of content were in vogue at the time. In this regard Hamel states, "in Henrici Bach sees the 'comedian who can teach the preacher.'"¹ Schweitzer maintains that Bach must have been an inspiration to Picander.

Bach's cooperation was an excellent stimulus to Picander. In the *St. Matthew Passion* he has produced his best

¹Fred Hamel, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), p. 189.

poem; the diction is animated and extremely rich in pictures; and there are few of those insipidities of his that annoy us in his other works. The situations are concisely described, and the reflections are simple but often really profound. The texts of the arioso-recitatives are indeed the best he ever wrote; they ² have a musical effect even when we merely read them.

Picander was born in Stolpen, near Meissen, in Saxony and attended the University of Wittenberg. In 1720 he came to Leipzig to enroll in the university there and later entered civil service, holding various posts at different times. Rising through several administrative positions, he was employed by the postal service, then as collector of alcoholic beverage taxes, wine inspector and then again as tax collector. Picander was given to the writing of satirical and humorous verses and in 1721 published some poems whose sarcasm earned him a few enemies. By the following year he gained a reputation as the author of audacious and humorous poetry. Some of his works were written for specific occasions in the lives of the Leipzig students and citizens, according to the custom of the times.

In 1724 Picander entered the field of writing spiritual poetry to everyone's amazement and published his *Sammlung erbaulicher Gedanken über und auf die gewöhnlichen Sonn- und Festtage*. Two of these selections were reworked for use in two of Bach's cantatas. In spite of the fact

²Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), II, 210.

that he had no theological background, nor was he influenced by the new literary style in Leipzig under the aegis of Gottsched, he continued his writings. Then leaving the writing of sacred texts behind, he tried his hand at the production of three farces. When these failed to gain any recognition he returned to religious poetry. In 1725 he brought out a Passion libretto commissioned by Bach entitled, *Erbauliche Gedanken auf den Grünen Donnerstag und Charfreitag über den leidenden Jesum, in einen Oratorio entworfen*. It is possible that Bach set this to music, but if so, the score has not survived. This work was widely read in Leipzig and reached four editions by 1748. Several arias of the *St. Matthew Passion* (numbers 47, 58, and 61) are from this work.

The following year saw the publication by Picander of a collection of seventy cantata texts laid out for the entire year. This bore the title, *Cantaten auf die Sonn- und Festtage durch das gantze Jahr*. From this collection Bach used nine selections for his compositions. Over the ten-year period of from 1727 through 1737 four additional volumes of this librettist's work appeared known as, *Ernstschertzhaften und satyrischen Gedichten*, already mentioned above. These pieces were a mixture of secular, profane and sacred texts which included the 1731 text, "*Passions-Musik nach dem Evangelisten Marco am Charfreitag*." Bach set this to music he had previously composed in 1727 as the *Trauerode*

for the occasion of the death of Queen Christiane Eberhardine, the text of which was supplied by Gottsched. While the music of the *St. Mark's Passion* is lost, the setting of the *Trauerode* has survived. (Bach had previously composed a *St. John's Passion* in 1723 which was presented in Leipzig prior to his assuming his post there several weeks later. It was based on the Brockes' libretto of 1712, *Der für die Sünden der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus*.)

Picander was a member of Leipzig's *Collegium musicum* of which Bach was at one time director, and so Hamel assumes that he must have had at least some understanding for the musical requirements of texts which were eventually to be set to music.³ From 1729 on Picander became the acknowledged collaborator with Bach. He provided the texts for many of the cantatas and the funeral music for the entombment of Prince Leopold of Köthen on March 23, 1729. (The score of this composition consisted of portions of the *St. Matthew Passion* upon which Bach was working at the time in preparation for its first performance the following month.)

The *St. Matthew Passion* is a composite of several ingredients and influences. Brockes' allegorical Daughter of Zion is used for making responses to the successive

³Hamel, p. 185.

scenes of the moving narrative. The narrative, as already mentioned, is the verbatim Luther text. Picander's stanzas are influenced by the tradition of Neumeister and the style of Salomo Franck, the latter being one with whom Bach worked in Weimar. The chorales come out of the Lutheran tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The lines of Rist and Rambach also served as inspirational models for Picander.

Most Bach scholars assume that Bach felt himself free to alter Picander's work where necessary to bring it into conformity with his own musical, literary and theological sensitivities. They indicate that Bach exercised a close control over Picander's contributions. Hamel wryly remarks, Picander's "art finally consisted in making himself superfluous in allowing (the) genius (of early Protestant-Luthern hymnody) and also that of the great Leipzig Cantor to prevail."⁴

Spitta raises the question as to how a man of Bach's genius and sensitivities could have chosen so mediocre a co-worker as Picander. He then resolves his own question by contending that in all probability the greater literary figures of the times considered their work to stand by itself and not to be limited by or subjected to any strictures of musical composition. Their pride of style and authorship

⁴Ibid., p. 188.

would not permit of any adjustments or emendations imposed by the musical requirements of any potential combination of the two arts. In fact, Gottsched actually puts this into words:

In the second chapter (of his *Versuch einer Kritischen Dichtkunst*) he severely criticizes and ridicules the style of musical treatment of the text that today we call baroque. He has no respect for the librettist who lowered the art of poetry to accommodate composers... He attacks Neantes (Hunold) saying that he has given '...a mass of rules and made who-knows-what secrets out of them, that nobody understands, unless he is a great connoisseur of music. All these result in saying that the poet must be a slave to the composer, and must not think or say what he wants, but write so that the musician can let his caprices be heard right well.'⁵

So it appears that Picander was willing for the greatness of Bach to prevail over his own facile and sometimes tasteless efforts of providing a text for that composer. If this were actually the case, Bach must have appreciated the freedom and degree of determination that such an author afforded him for the accomplishment of his purpose.

For two decades Bach and Picander worked together until Bach had accomplished his aim of restoring a "well-regulated" liturgy for the Church. Picander's writing participates in the Baroque traits of vivid imagery and dramatic content, illustrating the biblical material with topical allusions and the typical metaphors of the time. In his choice of Picander as collaborator Bach passed over the

⁵Jan Chiapusso, *Bach's World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 259-60.

rationalistic poetry of Hunold and the writings of the Enlightenment as exhibited by Gottsched. And in his Passions he returned to the Brockes' relationship between the biblical narrative and the traditional chorale. With his treatment and inclusion of the latter in his compositions Bach, with only slight paraphrasing, returns to the venerable symbol of the chorale, the poesy of Martin Luther and the primeval hymn of the Reformation as the foundation of his work.

EVALUATION

Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* has been characterized as a "supplement to the sermon," "a declamation of the basic affirmations of the Christian faith."⁶ It has been referred to as "the most sublime music of history."⁷ Terry calls it "the deepest and most moving expression of devotional feeling in the whole of musical literature."⁸ He writes, this Passion

...is one of civilization's incomparable masterpieces and at the most solemn season of the Church's year unites Protestant Christendom in pious emotion; for, in

⁶Paul S. Minear, "Matthew, Evangelist, and Johann, Composer," *Theology Today* XXX (1973) 245.

⁷Robert Stevenson, *Patterns of Protestant Church Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1953), p. 52.

⁸Charles Sanford Terry, *The Music of Bach* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 77.

Parry's concise appreciation, it is 'the richest and noblest example of devotional music in existence.'⁹

André Pirro has said that in the *St. Matthew Passion* Bach unfolds with incredible vigor the materials of the Scriptures, embroidered with tears, agitated with whirlwinds, painted in diverse hues, now somber, now lurid, the coloring of flames and blood."¹⁰ Bruno Walter attributes the greatness of "this sublime masterpiece" to an "apostolic inspiration" that was the source of its origin.¹¹

ITS STRUCTURE

This work of Bach is organized in terms of a deliberate structure, its various differentiated parts each having a very specific function in the communication of the whole. It consists of two major sections, Part I. opening and closing with two mighty choruses and Part II. concluding the work with an almost ever-flowing chorus of consolation throughout which are woven arias for each of the basic four voices. These alternate with one another and the chorus in a reassurance of the divine rationale of the Passion of our Lord. This final chorus portrays the blissfulness of final slumber as a completed resolution to the

⁹Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁰André Pirro, *J. S. Bach* (New York: Bonanza Press, 1957), p. 156.

¹¹Bruno Walter, *Of Music and Music-Making* (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 190.

agony of the Passion of Christ. No reference is made to a theology of the resurrection as the denouement of the Passion, however, the consoling slumber song of the final chorus can only be written and received on such a basis.

Each of the two parts of this composition is divided into twelve sub-sections, each one of which is marked off by the introduction of either an aria or chorale. The major resting points are indicated by an aria which responds to the content of the narrative. Minor divisions are demarcated by the chorales which bind the congregation together in devotional response to what is taking place in the unfolding Gospel epic and which are the expressions of personal involvement with Christ's sufferings. The chorales express both individual and communal identification with the action in terms of musical confessions of faith through the media of the historical, familiar words and tunes of traditional Lutheranism. Bach sometimes even uses the device of setting familiar words to a familiar tune with which, however, they are not traditionally associated. In this way he is able to join meanings for the sake of special emphasis as well as expansion beyond the significance of either one standing alone.

Musicologists have debated the issue as to whether or not Bach actually intended the congregations to sing the chorales at the performances of this Passion. If not, he would have fully "professionalized" these renditions within

the service and liturgy of the Church to the point of reserving participation entirely for the church musician and thereby depriving the worshiper. This would have been entirely out of keeping with Luther's original musical reform in the worship service and inconsistent with Bach's aim to restore the eighteenth century service to its Lutheran foundation. It is difficult to believe that Bach would settle for a mere psychological or vicarious identification of the part of the church attender in place of an actual physical expression of a devotional involvement in what the various aspects of Christ's Passion mean for the individual worshiper in the nave.

This latter point of view is undergirded by Bruno Walter's interpretation of the function of the chorale in the *St. Matthew Passion*. He states that there is an anachronistic use to which the chorales are put in that they interrupt the sequence of the historical action delineated by the recitative narration in order to bring that past action into contact with the contemporary worshiping community.

The chorales (he writes)...occupy a...more distant plane (than the 'compassionate witnesses' who sing the arias and arisoso-recitatives), a timeless *afterwards* - in them we hear the voice of developed, existing Christianity. The Protestant congregation, its singing idealized in noble four-part writing, calmly and confidently sends its solacing message down the ages into the time-bound, changeful, anxious world of early Christianity the evangelist tells of.¹²

¹²Ibid., p. 173.

The chorales momentarily stop the action to give the present age's community the opportunity to acknowledge its sin and confess its guilt, thus identifying the latter-day witnesses with the original spectators.

In addition to the elements of the recitative narrative and the chorales which make up the *St. Matthew Passion* the arioso-recitative and aria have a specific function. They convey the responses of the individual "believer" to what is happening and the implications of the event for the person of faith. The anguish of the faithful who meditate upon the action is intimately and soulfully expressed in these compositions. Here the worshiper vicariously experiences the pain and loss over the death of the Savior. The arias are a continuation of these emotions and concepts already introduced in the arioso-recitatives. They also sometimes express joy over the gift of the Redeemer who assures forgiveness and effects intercession. In addition they convey fulfillment and rest in so far as the Sacrifice is completed and assurance prevails. Bruno Walter refers to the soloists and choruses that portray this third element as the "compassionate witnesses." "These soulful figures," he writes, "correspond, as it were, to the figures of the devout and prayerful, in their relation to the Saviour, or to the Holy Family in medieval painting."¹³

¹³ Ibid., p. 172.

ITS DEVOTIONALISM

A testimony to the worshipful character of the *St. Matthew Passion* is given by one of the soloists in the revival performance given by Mendelssohn in Berlin exactly one-hundred years after its first performance. The bass soloist, Edward Devrient, who took the part of Jesus on that occasion exclaimed, "Never have I felt a holier solemnity vested in a congregation than in the performance and the audience that evening."¹⁴ In regard to the resurrection of this Passion by the Romanticists of the nineteenth century, one might comment that they, better than Bach's contemporaries, appreciated both the devotionism and the sweeping musical qualities of this great work. What in Bach has been criticized as representing a highly stylized form of composition viewed as being mathematical and architectonic in structure and often regarded as an exercise in rhythmic precision, was recognized by the reclaimers of the Master as works reflecting a lyricism and ethereal devotionism that express the deepest emotions of pathos, contrition, divine majesty, joyous gaiety and reassuring consolation.

¹⁴Hans T. David, *The Bach Reader* (New York: Norton, 1943), p. 385.

ITS EXEGETICAL FUNCTION

Bach's Skill

Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* for all its devotion-ism is an example of his exegetical skill as he addresses himself to the biblical text. There is an undiluted realism here as the composer presents the narrative of events and also gives the heart-felt religious response of those present. It is almost as if "Bach saw mirrored in the twelve disciples the faces of contemporary Christian congregations."¹⁵ The work of exegesis consists of relating the contemporary mind and spirit to the biblical content under view. In his *History of Interpretation*, F. W. Farrar states,

the one aim of the interpreter should be to ascertain the specific meaning of the inspired teacher, and to clothe it in the forms which will best convey that meaning to the minds of the contemporaries.¹⁶

Commenting on this Minear says,

that statement of aim fits Bach in his composition of the *St. Matthew Passion*. Judged by the same statement, Bach's work still conveys to audiences today the meaning of the narrative in Matthew's Gospel more effectively than any other recent scholarly commentary with which I am familiar.¹⁷

¹⁵Minear, "Matthew, Evangelist,...," p. 249.

¹⁶quoted by Paul S. Minear, "J. S. Bach and J. A. Ernesti: A Case Study in Exegetical and Theological Conflict," in *Our Common History as Christians, Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 150.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 150-1.

As Bach presents the successive verses of the Scriptural text and the commentaries and responses of the libretto he literally engages the listener with everything that is going on.

This powerful method of pointing and directing everything to the hearer achieves a wonderful effect. The listener is drawn into the redemptive suffering and death of Christ. Thereby he is led into all the depth of that Christian piety which is bound to the Cross. Moreover, by means of this intimate relationship between narration and audience we are enabled to see that the biblical events, bound by time, possess a content which is over and above all time, the value of the past for the present. We experience in the Passion history a living feeling of its present worth.¹⁸

Sequence of Musical Forms

The method by which Bach achieves this exegesis and personal apprehension by the listener is by means of a patterned sequence of material, alternating the musical forms and what they convey with one another. The pattern is not a set, strict, identical sequence in each case, but it does reveal the interplay of its various parts in terms of their specific functions as narrative-recitative is followed by arioso-recitative, chorus, aria and chorale in various orders. The Gosepl text is given to set each scene and tell the story. No verse of the Lutheran rendition of Matthew 26 and 27 is left out. The chorus is used to indicate the

¹⁸Willibrand Gurlitt, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Master and His Work* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1957), p. 117.

responses in the narrative made by the crowd or the disciples. Arioso-recitative is often used for the words of Jesus. Other arioso-recitatives convey the commentary or emotional and personal response of the believer. The aria selections have the same function. Responding as the contemporary community the worshipers convey their responses and individual identification with various scenes and actions through singing the appropriately chosen chorale stanza.

By employing these sequences of the different musical forms in his *St. Matthew Passion* Bach exposes us to the central doctrines of the faith of his Church.

This Lutheran faith, focused on grace, death and eternity, no doubt finds its purest expression in the Passion of Christ. The Passion embraces the whole of the Christian faith and touches its deepest emotion; the church year, with its miracles of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, is built around the Passion of Christ; the Passion serves the church year as mysterious and ever-present center. Good Friday and the church music of Bach belong together in the deepest and inseparable intimacy.¹⁹

An example of a typical sequence of action and interaction with the respondents is found near the beginning of *Passion*. The Gospel portion is Matthew 26:6-13 which finds Jesus in Bethany receiving the adoration of the woman who anoints him with precious perfume. The declaratory recitative states the situation in Number 6 (the numeration fol-

¹⁹Ibid., p. 77.

lowed throughout refers to the Peters' Leipzig edition that is customarily assumed by others). Number 7 is the response of the disciples, rendered by the chorus, in which they object to "this waste." *Secco recitative* and arioso-recitative in Number 8 convey the continuation of the narration and the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. To Jesus' words, that what the woman has done will be reported throughout the world as a memorial to her, the faithful believer responds with an arioso-recitative, Number 9: *Du lieber Heiland du*. "Thou my beloved Redeemer, when thy disciples quarrel foolishly over this woman who seeks to prepare thy body for its tomb, then allow me meanwhile to anoint thy brow with the laving of my eyes' tearful flow." This comment and request sets the tone both emotionally and musically for the final element of this sequence, the aria, *Buss und Reu*, Number 10. The text conveys the contrition of penitent woman who is making her sacrifice to Jesus. This emotion is also within the heart of the one who offers her libation of tears to her Savior. "Repentance and remorse grate the sinning heart in two, that my tear drops may be an acceptable embalmment, faithful Jesus." The music Bach has composed for this aria carries with it all the pathos of a broken, contrite heart in a sobbing, almost wailing, motive indicated by the note sequences. The allusion to weeping is accompanied by staccato notes to simulate the tears dropping. Here is an example of the devo-

tional, intimate expression of which Bach was so capable and which typically conveys worshipful, involved response to the Gospel scene.

Sometimes the sequence includes the chorale as well. Such is the one beginning with the preparation of the Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-29), Numbers 13 through 19. The order here is recitative, chorus, recitative, chorus, chorale, recitative, arioso-recitative and aria. The chorus conveys the words of the disciples in the dialogue; the narration and Jesus' words come through the recitative; the personal response to the issues raised in the narrative are carried by the chorale, arioso-recitative and aria. When Jesus announces that one among the disciples will betray him, each one, except Judas, asks, "Is it I?" While this is rendered by the chorus, Bach uses the ingenious device of having the question repeated eleven times in a contrapuntal figure. The chorale functions at this very point where the question of guilt is raised. Following the disciples' questioning (they do not know their guilt) the community acknowledges its responsibility. Yet the first person pronoun is in the singular as the congregation responds in unison: "I am the one, I am to repent, hands and feet bound in hell, the lash and restraint and all thou hast suffered, my soul has deserved." Confession is the mood and response. The chorale tune for Number 16 is Isaak's, *O Welt ich muss dich lassen*, but the text is

Gerhardt's *O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben*. The fifth stanza used here is but one of the sixteen of this Passion hymn which depicts the suffering of Christ, the confession of guilt, the atoning benefits, the self-offering, the obedience and the final rest gained through identification with the crucifixion.

Function of the Chorale

Among the fifteen times Bach brings a chorale into the sequence of the Passion narrative is one in response to Jesus' agony in Gethsemane. The struggle is portrayed with realistic and dramatic intensity. When it is finally resolved through the acceptance of God's will by Jesus, the faithful community responds with the selection Number 31. The chorale is *Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh' allzeit*, "Whatever God wills always occurs." The text is one attributed to Albrecht, Herzog von Preussen (1490-1598). The tune is based on the French, *Il me suffit de tous mes maux*, dated 1529. To Jesus' acquiescent victory in the Garden, the congregation responds by means of this chorale, "Whatever God wills always occurs, his will, that is the best; he is prepared to help those who upon him steadfastly believe; he succors those in need, the pious God, and chastizes in good measure. Who trusts God and builds upon him, that one he will never forsake."

The selection of the chorales used in the *Passion* was left to Bach. He not only chose the appropriate tunes, but also the stanzas and sometimes used verses from different hymns other than those traditionally associated with the particular tune employed. Regarding these chorales, Schweitzer writes,

At minor resting points the feelings of the Christian spectators are expressed in chorale verses. The choice of these fell to Bach since no poet of that epoch who had any respect for himself would be troubled with a secondary task of that kind. It is just in the insertion of these chorale strophes that the full depth of Bach's poetic sense is revealed. It would be impossible to find, in the whole of the hymns of the German church, a verse better fitted to its particular purpose than the one Bach has selected.²⁰

The selections were made from the eight-volume, standard collection published in Leipzig in 1697 under the title, *Andächtiger Seelen geistliches Brand- und Ganz-Opfer*. The success with which Bach made his choices indicates both his artistic and theological sense of what was best suited for the need at hand as well as his extensive familiarity with the vast repertoire from which to draw.

The chorales not only express the involved worshipful response of the faithful Christian to the various episodes of the Passion of his Lord, but they also are the vehicle whereby the whole of Christendom is united in

²⁰Schweitzer, II, 210.

devotion at the Cross and Tomb. This has been expressed by Bruno Walter in the following passage in which he shares his experience during the conducting of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*:

In Munich I was already asking myself why every entry of a chorale shook me to the roots of my being. The answer which I found, and in which I was confirmed by the renewal of these experiences in New York, has been vouchsafed to me in the form of an intuition, almost indescribable verbally. Nothing but this lofty concept will describe what happened to me: with the entry of the chorale, cosmic expansion was gained by that which I had previously had to recreate out of my own resources as a historically and locally confined dramatic scene. What came over me was beyond the sphere of drama and beyond the feelings of the particular faithful (ones) - in the words of the solemn pace of the chorale I perceived mankind united, dedicated, confessing, praying; every time, I was aware of a harsh change when we returned from the world-embracing sphere of the chorale to the confined space of the Passion drama (itself).²¹

The achievement of Bach's exegetical genius in tying the historico-biblical and theological content of the narrative to the contemporary participant of any era or place is matched by his musical and liturgical achievement of reclaiming the chorale to function as the unifying force of the confessional community. In the *St. Matthew Passion* we have a most effective illustration as to how Bach accomplished just that by introducing the chorale so frequently into that masterpiece of worship. This is an evidence of his relationship to Lutheran orthodoxy as he both used the materials of that tradition and employed them in its

²¹Walter, pp. 178-9.

liturgical service. Both media and technique served to align him with that emphasis. The intimacy and devotion-
alism of the chorale texts used also belong to orthodoxy in
that they were the creations of the sixteenth and seven-
teenth century Lutheran poets earlier described. The Pi-
cander libretto reflects that same devotionism as well as
does the degree of piety expressed by the orthodoxist Erd-
mann Neumeister and Bach's Weimar collaborator, Salomo
Franck. These Bach had lifted up to his Leipzig librettist
as models to be emulated.

Function of the Commentaries

The non-narrative texts of the *St. Matthew Passion*
fall into various categories with reference to their func-
tion. These responses to and commentaries upon the action
sequence can be classified according to what rôle they
play in the total composition. Some give expression to
confession and repentance; others serve to convey the inner
and intense emotions of the spectators; there are some
which fulfill a didactic function; and still others pro-
vide consolation and reassurance to the mourners.

The chorus that brings Part I. to a close, "O man,
bemoan your grievous sin" (No. 35), in this opening line is
a call to confession. It continues, however, in a didactic
rôle to state God's purpose in the birth and sacrifice of
his Son. Number 16, "I am the one, I am to repent," has

already been mentioned in terms of the believer taking upon himself the guilt for which Jesus is being punished.

Several of the arioso-recitatives and arias are masterpieces of intense emotional upheaval within the sensitivities of the spectator. The recitative and chorale numbered 25 follow upon Jesus' arrival at Gethsemane and his statement that his soul is "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Here the tenor depicts the shivering, pained and tortured heart that is beyond the reach of help and comfort. The continuo semi-quavers of the accompaniment portray the trembling spirit. Interwoven between the declamation of such suffering is the chorale, "What is the cause of such a plight?" A confession provides the answer, "My sins have slain thee." This is the third stanza of Johann Heermann's hymn, *Herzliebster Jesu*, used here for the second of three times in the *Passion*. The flowing lines of the Crüger chorale provide the relief and comfort for the strident strains of the recitative.

Another such pathos-ridden statement is found in the arioso-recitative, "Ah Golgatha, wretched Golgatha!" (No. 69). The lament is for the guiltless One bearing the pain. The pain and injustice of it cut to the quick! An oboe duo provides the plaintive accompaniment descriptive of the heaving soul, while in the bass line the plucking of the 'celli in a sequence of fairly widely separated intervals simulates the tolling of funeral bells, to refer to

Schweitzer's interpretation of the imagery. This moves into an aria with similar instrumentation and bass accompaniment. Solemn though it is, the message is one of hope and comfort: "See Jesus who reaches out his hand to be grasped by us. Come, come seek your redemption in his arms. Receive mercy. Love, die, rest here, ye forsaken chicks. Remain in Jesus' arms." Here Bach uses his favorite dialogue technique, alternating between the soloist and the chorus which asks monosyllabically regarding each imperative, "Whither?," "Where?," "Where?".

Didactic Function

Instruction is given in the sequence in which Jesus is led before Caiaphas and the assembly to be interrogated. He has no answer for his accusers. In the recitative Number 40, the soloist reports that Jesus remains silent in the face of false lies *in order* to teach us that he bends his will to suffering mercifully for our sakes and that we also should maintain our calm under similar pain. The following aria exhorts patience even though we be stung by lying tongues. Another didactic section contains a note of sarcasm in spite of its lofty beauty. In recitative 56 Pilate responds to the crowds demand, "Crucify him!" He asks, "Why, what evil has he done?" The arioso-recitative 57 answers with a summary of Jesus ministry: "He has benefited us all: to the blind he restored sight; he makes

the lame to walk; he teaches us his Father's word; he exorcized the devils; he raised the oppressed; he took to himself the sinners; - other than that my Jesus has done nothing!" The next aria (No. 58) extends the thought: "For love's sake my Savior wants to die...so that eternal punishment and the penalty of judgment no longer remains upon my soul."

Consolation and Reassurance

Consolation and reassurance are only available in so far as one peers beyond the confines of the Passion story to anticipate the final triumph and vindication of the sacrificial offering. Only on the basis of this prospect and the already availability of such a promise can the faithful soul which accompanies this dreadful sequence of events continue its watchful vigil. All comes to rest in the end as death is portrayed as a blissful slumber. The strains and spirit of Luther's hymn, *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin* seem to pervade the atmosphere. It is a paraphrase of the *Nunc dimittis*:

*In peace and joy I now depart,
At God's disposing;
For full of comfort is my heart,
Soft reposing.
So the Lord hath promis'd me
And death is but a slumber.*

*'Tis Christ that wrought this work for me,
The faithful Saviour
Whom thou has made mine eyes to see
By thy favor.*

*In him I behold my life,
My help in need and dying.*²²

As the *St. Matthew Passion* comes to its close the bass soloist sings the aria (No. 75): "Cleanse thyself, my heart, I would myself bury Jesus, for he shall have his sweet rest within me continuously. Exit world, let Jesus enter." The Gospel text narration ends with the account of the sealing of the tomb. The last recitative is sung with the interspersing choral lines: "My Jesus, Good Night!" four times in response to each of the solo parts giving the final words of penance and thanksgiving. The great flowing concluding chorus spells out the tearful bliss of eternal slumber as the chorus intones: "Rest softly, softly rest." The words seem to echo and re-echo not only through the vault of the tomb, but they also reverberate throughout eternity. Suffering and torture are now relieved and resolved in final and beautiful rest.

Expansion of Meaning

A closing word regarding the exegetical work of Bach as illustrated in the *St. Matthew Passion* is that the composer is not a slave to the text recited in the narration. In his interpretations he expanded it and associated

²²James F. Lambert, *Luther's Hymns* (Philadelphia: General Council, 1917), p. 63.

it with other biblically based theological insights. After the account of Jesus' body being delivered to Joseph of Arimathea, there follows an arioso-recitative (No. 74) in which the theme of the time-of-day is related to other biblical events. "In the coolness of the evening Adam's fall became known. In the evening the Savior presses him down; At eventide returned the dove bearing an olive leaf in its bill. O beautiful time! O evening hour! Reconciliation with God is now accomplished since Jesus has finished with his Cross. Ah, precious soul, pray thee, go let them give thee the dead Jesus, O saving, O lavish memorial! Bach reaches through the pages of Scripture to bind together the redemptive meanings and episodes of its message of deliverance from the Fall as he uses the time-of-day reference for his artistic device to accomplish this.

Non-Traditional Interpretations

Bach occasionally departs from traditional interpretations and provides his own. The Last Supper sequence, Numbers 13 through 19, is rendered with a peaceful strength and reassurance borrowed from a foreknowledge of the outcome of the Passion. The Christian's faith is not exclusively dependent for its content upon the immediate events at hand. The Disciples' anxiety of the impending betrayal and the anguish of the soul's response to that information is counteracted and softened by the spirit of Christ in the

institution of the Eucharist. Schweitzer remarks:

(Bach's) conception of the Bible words is not always the customary one; it comes from a profound and very personal emotion. The music he has given to the sacramental words of the Last Supper in the *St. Matthew Passion* is astounding. There is not a trace of grief. The music breathes peace and majesty; the nearer it draws to the end, the more stately becomes the quavering movement in the basses. Bach sees Jesus standing before the disciples with radiant face, prophesying of the day when He will again drink from the cup at the heavenly supper with them in His father's kingdom. Bach has thus emancipated himself from the conventional idea of the scene, and, by means of his artistic intuition, has attained a juster sense of it than theology has ever done.²³

This is Bach's eschatological perspective transforming the harsh events in time.

His interpretation of Judas also differs from the usual. Although elsewhere in his works Bach associates Judas with the betraying serpent, here he treats him with greater empathy. The melismatic fashion in which Judas' suicide is handled emphasizes the tragedy of self-victimization. It appears that

Bach thinks of Judas as the lost son whose repayment of his murder's wages may represent a return of faith. ... In this respect Bach may have treated Judas more sympathetically than Matthew did.²⁴

The bass aria which follows (No. 51) can be taken as Judas' contrite yearning for the return of his Jesus as well as the call of the faithful believer for the restoration to him of his betrayed and lost Savior. "Return again my

²³Schweitzer, II, 35.

²⁴Minear, "Matthew, Evangelist...", p. 251.

Jesus to me! See, the money, the murder payment, the son of perdition casts down before you at your feet!"

CONCLUSION

All these emotions, exhortation, teachings and interpretations become, within the context of the narrative of Christ's passion according to Saint Matthew and Johann Sebastian Bach, the occasion of the faithful seeker to sink his soul into the redemptive heart of Jesus. And so the strict categories of orthodox Lutheran theology are cast in the personal and intimately-to-be-appropriated expressions of love for and dependence upon the Savior Jesus Christ whom God in his gracious goodness gives to a sinful creation.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we come again to the question of orthodox *versus* Pietist elements in Bach and the extent to which he was influenced by both. Bach's "devotionalism" results from his function as a biblical exegete according to which he sought not merely to reproduce the text musically for its normal, face-value interpretation, but rather to reproduce it for its emotional, subjectively-involved appropriation by the worshiper through an actual religious experience. And yet he could not have done this merely as an astute and clever technician. There was an aspect to his nature which was sensitive and responsive to the depth meanings of these texts as applied to a personal religious life bespeaking an underlying piety in his make-up. That is what was stirred within him to enable him to produce such "heavenly" music even though his outward behavior and relationships were not particularly known as pious.

Bach took the human, emotional basis of the affections and expressed them through musical structures, giving them both - in this combination - a religious significance.

Bach spiritualized the affections and made them musical elements in the life of the church. That is to say, he imparted to them qualities that reflected the aspirations of the congregation and in which it could join with its own unbroken religious expression. Bach... understood (affection) as something through which the religious intensity of the whole congregation might be

expressed. He chose it as the sign and symbol for the benefit of the congregation. He took it as the Lutheran 'confessio.'¹

To accomplish this Bach concerned himself with the meaning of the word which he approached as an intimate spiritual conversation with God rather than as an expression of formal doctrine. He thus brings a pious intensity to its interpretation. His music sought to expand and reveal the meaning of the word, sometimes even its "concealed" meaning. It is this approach which Schrade describes as Bach's "Pietistic attitude."² Bach's inclinations and *modus operandi*, as he dealt interpretively with the word, more closely resembled the Pietist categories of exegesis than those associated with Lutheran orthodoxy. Intensity, intimacy, immediacy, subjectivism, emotionalism, personal relatedness and application to self, devotionism, worshipfulness - all these attributes which we find so abundantly and consistently in Bach's music and exegesis suggest more the Pietist expressions and concerns than they do those of orthodox Lutheranism, normally understood. However, it must be distinctly said that Lutheranism also had its place for the expression of the affections in accordance with the above-listed categories, for it was into this

¹Leo Schrade, *Bach, The Conflict between the Sacred and the Secular* (New York: Merlin Press, 1966), pp. 132-3.

²Ibid., p. 55.

rich heritage of the chorale texts that Bach reached for the verbal vehicles of what he said musically. In this sense, Pietism has no exclusive possession of such forms of expression. Indeed, many of Bach's text sources claimed orthodox loyalties and openly denounced the Pietists.

By biographical background, education, and conscious choice Bach was a Lutheran and overtly avoided Pietism. Furthermore, he was self-bound to the religious, liturgical, theological and musical traditions of official Lutheranism. His avowed aim in life was to work within that context, to perform, reorganize, revitalize and restore church music to its highest function within the liturgy of the Church. He sought to lift it to its highest expression. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, as shown in Chapter 4, to a large extent expresses Luther's perspective on how one ought to relate to this act of God which places Jesus on the Cross. His other works also reflect Luther's theological perspective regarding God's redemptive grace in Christ to be appropriated by the believer through faith. On the other hand, Bach distinctly disliked any immoderate exuberance and excessiveness that was revealed by many of the Pietists. His loyalty to his orthodox heritage was clear. He exhibited none of the ascetic tendencies of Pietism. The richness ornamentation, elaborateness and highly textured expressiveness of his music earned only contempt from the Pietists for his creations.

(Bach's) piety was genuine, and although he resented the hostility toward art shown by the Pietists and looked for support from the orthodox ministers, his music showed the influence of subjectivist religion.³

But the source of that subjectivism was also to be found within the Lutheran tradition.

Viewed doctrinally, the choice Bach makes of his texts and the musical treatment he provides for them show him to stand squarely within the ranks of traditional Lutheranism.

The musical language echoes Bach's Lutheranism and Luther's Paulinism. Implicit in both is the doctrine of substitutionary atonement: 'His soul's distress atones for my death. His sorrows make joy possible' (*St. Matthew Passion*, No. 26). Yet...for...(Bach) faith is not a matter of intellectual calculation, but of emotional involvement, not a matter of quantitative substitution, but of personal love, Jesus' sacrifice elicits affections, not arguments.⁴

The nature of the textual material from the Gospel with which Bach deals in the *St. Matthew Passion* makes inescapable, as it flows through the spirit of the composer, the individual reference and personal application. This the music also conveys, and so the subjectivism is inevitable. It results to a large extent from the additional material that is provided as commentary and personal response to the Gospel narrative. Bach selected and reworked

³Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany 1648-1840* (New York: Knopf, 1963), p. 171.

⁴Paul S. Minear, "Matthew, Evangelist, and Johann, Composer," *Theology Today* XXX (1973), 250.

the meditative poetry used for that purpose. Therefore, the final musical composition, though its ingredients are drawn from many sources, reflects the creative spirit of Bach at every point.

While Bach is clearly a staunch Lutheran, he must not be judged to be an ultraconservative one. He was a conserver and restorer in respect of his use and reclamation of the chorale and his reform of the liturgy. Yet,

as a composer he developed many new patterns of interpretation. Although they belonged to a distinct genre and were performed in a conventional Good Friday service his Passions were genuinely innovative; his conception of the successive scenes was far from traditional. In fact, as Smend contends, 'nothing Bach adopted remained unchanged.'⁵ He was as vigorous an exponent of 'liberation' as was his rector (and adversary, Ernesti), though each sought to be freed from different enslavements.⁶

For all his innovation, it was by gathering up the threads of the past that Bach carried on his reform. The chorale and liturgy of the traditional Church and the unchanged Gospel text which Bach restored to the retelling of the Passion were the materials with which this Master of the Baroque wove his tapestry.

⁵Friedrich Smend, *Luther und Bach* (Berlin: Verlagshaus und Schule GmbH, 1947), p. 15.

⁶Paul S. Minear, "J. S. Bach and J. A. Ernesti: A Case Study in Exegetical and Theological Conflict," in *Our Common History as Christian, Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 137.

Bach accomplished his vocational goal as expressed in his Mühlhausen declaration; however, his contemporaries ignored his achievement.

It was the greatest tragedy of his musicianship that at the close of his life he could say that he had accomplished what he set out to achieve. But his accomplishment echoed in a vacuum. This was a momentous catastrophe, not only for Bach, but for the whole ideal of his work. His most mature compositions, significant of his later style, won no acclaim in their own time.⁷

The Pietists considered Bach's compositions "devilish blasphemies." His own contemporaries, according to the rationalistic bias of the Enlightenment, referred to him as an anachronism, a throw-back to former, dead institutions and categories.

A century later, however, Zeltner exclaimed to his friend, Goethe, "*Bach ist eine Erscheinung Gottes, klar doch unerklärbar*" (Bach is a phenomenon of God; clear, yet unable to be explained).⁸

The Lutheran church afforded Bach the tradition in which to accomplish his goal of reforming church music. It could only have happened within the institution whose founder considered music as "the handmaid of theology." It was that heritage which provided the traditional institutions

⁷Schrade, p. 111.

⁸William H. Scheide, *Johann Sebastian Bach as a Biblical Interpreter* (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1953), p. 36.

of the liturgy, the chorale and the cantorship in terms of which Bach's accomplishment took place. Pietism denied the possibility of any music in its worship other than the purely simple, often sentimental, devotional hymn. It repressed all instrumental embellishments and ambitions.

The roots of Bach's "devotionalism," which are often mistaken for Pietism, lie in the sixteenth and seventeenth century orthodox Lutheran poets whose emphasis the Pietists carried farther than Bach would ever go. Springing from an ancient, Medieval mysticism that equally effected the traditions of both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, this spirit made its way into Bach's religious nature and expressed itself in his works in the words of these orthodox poets. It is their expressions and emotions supplied in the chorales of the *St. Matthew Passion* that Bach extended into the arioso-recitatives and arias to convey the believer's response to the Gospel message. This is what makes that Passion so noble a vehicle of worship in fulfillment of Bach's service to the orthodox Lutheran liturgy.

This, then, is the monumental accomplishment of Johann Sebastian Bach within his beloved, although often vexing, Church, carried out in faithfulness to its Reformer as Bach sought to effect a reformation of his own, even as he was influenced by the Italian mode of musical expression and the subjective mode of devotional response to the beauty and power of God's Word.

A P P E N D I X E S

APPENDIX A

LUTHERAN CHORALES IN THE *SAINT MATTHEW PASSION*

<u>Peters Edition Number</u>	<u>Times Used</u>	<u>Repeti- tion</u>	<u>Tune Name and Date</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Stanzas</u>
1. 1.	1		O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig, 1542	Anonymous	Nicolaus Decius died 1541	1 1531
2. 3.	3	(a)	Herzliebster Jesu, 1640	Johann Crüger 1598-1662	Johann Heermann 1585-1647	1 1630
3. 16.	2	(a)	O Welt, ich muss dich lassen, 1490	Heinrich Isaak c. 1450-1517	Paul Gerhardt 1607-1667	5 O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben, 1647
4. 21.	5	(a)	Herzlich tut mich ver- langen, 1601	Hans Leo Hass- ler, 1564-1612	Paul Gerhardt 1607-1676	5 O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden, 1656
5. 23.	5	(b)	Herzlich tut mich ver- langen, 1601	Hans Leo Hass- ler, 1564-1612	Paul Gerhardt 1607-1676	6 O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden, 1656
6. 25.	3	(b)	Herzliebster Jesu, 1640	Johann Crüger 1598-1662	Johann Heermann 1585-1647	3 1630
7. 31.	1		Was mein Gott will, c. 1529 (French: Il me suffit de tous mes maux)	French	Albrecht, Her- zog von Preus- sen 1490-1568	1 c. 1554

	<u>Peters Edition Number</u>	<u>Times Used</u>	<u>Repeti- tion</u>	<u>Tune Name and Date</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Stanzas</u>
8.	35.	1		O Mensch, beweine dein Sünde gross, 1525	Matthäus Greit- ner (?) d.c.1550	Sebald Heyden, 1494-1561	1 1525
9.	38.	1		Auf dich hab ich ge- hoffnet, c. 1581 (?)	Sethus Calvisius 1556-1615	Adam Reusner 1496-1578	5 (Psalm 31) 1533
10.	44.	2	(b)	O Welt, ich muss dich lassen, 1490	Heinrich Isaak, c. 1450-1517	Paul Gerhardt 1607-1676	3 O Welt sich hier dein Leben, 1647
11.	48.	1		Werde Munter Mein Ge- müte, 1642	Johann Schop c. 1600-1665	Johann Rist 1607-1667	6 1642
12.	53.	5	(c)	Herzlich tut mich ver- langen, 1601	Hans Leo Hass- ler, 1564-1612	Paul Gerhardt 1607-1676	1 Befiehl du deine Wege, 1653
13.	55.	3	(c)	Herzliebster Jesu, 1640	Johann Crüger 1598-1662	Johann Heermann 1585-1647	4 1630
14.	63.	5	(d)	Herzlich tut mich ver- langen, 1601	Hans Leo Hass- ler, 1564-1612	Paul Gerhardt 1607-1676	1 and 2 O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden, 1656
15.	72.	5	(e)	Herzlich tut mich ver- langen, 1601	Hans Leo Hass- ler, 1564-1612	Paul Gerhardt 1607-1676	9 O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden, 1656

SUMMARY: Eight chorales are used in fifteen places in the *St. Matthew Passion*.

1. Herzzliebster Jesu (Heermann), stanzas 1 (3.), 3 (25.), and 4 (55.)
(Parentheses indicate Peters' Edition number.)
2. O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden (Gerhardt), stanzas 1 (63.), 2 (63.), 5 (21.), 6 (23.)
and 9 (72.)
3. O Welt sieh hier dein Leben (Gerhardt), stanzas 3 (44.) and 5 (16.)
4. Was mein Gott will (Albrecht von Preussen), stanza 1 (31.)
5. O Mensch beweine deine Sünde gross (Heyden), stanza 1 (35.)
6. Auf dich hab ich gehoffnet (Reusner), stanza 5 (38.)
7. Werde munter mein Gemüte (Rist), stanza 6 (48.)
8. Befiehl du deine Wege (Gerhardt), stanza 1 (53.)

APPENDIX B

PASSIONS BEFORE AND DURING THE TIME OF BACH

<i>Passion</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Composer</i>
St. Matthew	1613	Melchior Vulpius 1560-1616
St. John	1643	Thomas Selle 1599-1663
The Last Seven Words from the Cross	1645	Heinrich Schütz 1585-1672
St. Matthew	1664	Thomas Strotius
St. Luke	1664	Heinrich Schütz
St. John	1665	Heinrich Schütz
St. Matthew	1666	Heinrich Schütz
St. Matthew	1667	Christian Flor ?-1697
The Last Seven Words from the Cross	1670	Augustin Pflieger
St. Matthew	1672	Johann Sebastiani 1622-1683
St. Matthew	1673	Johann Theile 1646-1724
St. Matthew	1700	Johann Meder
St. Matthew	1700	Johann Kühnhausen
<i>Der blutige und sterbende Jesus</i> (Hunold libretto)	1704	Reinhard Keiser 1674-1739
<i>Tränen unter dem Kreutze Jesu</i> (König libretto)	1711	Reihard Keiser
<i>Der für die Sünden der Welt</i> <i>gemarterte und sterbende Jesus</i> (Brockes libretto)	1712	Reinhard Keiser

<i>Passion</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Composer</i>
<i>Der zum Tode verurtheilte und gekreuzigte Jesus</i> (König libretto)	1715	Reinhard Keiser
<i>Der für die Sünden der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus</i> (Brockes libretto)	1716	Georg Friedrich Händel 1685-1759
St. Mark	1721	Johann Kuhnau 1660-1722
St. John	1723	Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750
St. Matthew (Picander libretto)	1729	Johann Sebastian Bach
St. Mark (music lost)	1731	Johann Sebastian Bach
<i>Der Tod Jesu</i>	1755	Karl Heinrich Graun 1704-1759

This is an amplified version of the tabulation which appears in Basil Smallman's *The Background of Passion Music, J. S. Bach and His Predecessors* (London: S C M Press, 1957), pp. 31-2.

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